

Minjung Theology: Illumination or Moonshine?

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This paper will examine a number of the central concepts of minjung theology, its Biblical basis, and some of the history of the Korean Church relevant to the understanding of minjung theology. The paper will conclude with a critique of these concepts and some recommendations for their incorporation into the thought and practice of the Church at large.

WHO ARE THE MINJUNG?

This term is an elusive one to translate into English. This is perhaps because it is difficult to define even in its own Korean context. As Younghak Hyun says, "we minjung theologians could not agree on any kind of definition and decided that it is not definable."¹ Perhaps Kim Yong-bock explains this difficulty best when he says

"Minjung" is not a concept or object which can be easily explained or defined. "Minjung" signifies a living reality which is dynamic, changing, and complex. This living reality defines its own existence and generates new acts and dramas in history; and it refuses in principle to be defined conceptually.²

Unqualified as I am to criticize native Koreans' discussion of their own language, it seems a copout to me to say that a term so critical to Korean Christian experience that it has named a whole new theology is simply indefinable. Therefore I intend to recount here some of the best statements I have found which attempt to define or at least describe the minjung. Once this is done I will attempt to distill the briefest and most comprehensive definition of which I am capable from these descriptions and from my learning in this area in recent weeks. Such an exercise is valuable, at the

very least, for me as a theologian as it is valuable for everyone who does theology to reflect upon the meaning of central terms and concepts with which they are dealing. The more seemingly ineffable the concept, the more intentional and protracted should be the struggle for definition. Though the labor may be frustrating, the fruit of it cannot help but be more learning. With this in mind the following descriptions from various Korean writers are offered.

"underdogs"...the minjung are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated sociologically, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. In a situation where political power plays the dominant role the politically oppressed ones are the minjung.³

Minjung is a Korean word, but it is a combination of two Chinese characters "min" and "jung." "Min" may be translated as "people" and "jung" as "the mass." Thus "minjung" means "the mass of the people, or mass, or just the people."..."Minjung" is a term which grew out of the Christian experiences in the political struggle for justice over the last ten or more years.⁴

Today the term minjung may be used for all those who are excluded from the elite who enjoy prestigious positions in the present dictatorial system...They have been reduced to objects of those who hold power, and have become their tools. Whatever contribution they make to society gives credit only to their masters and they are left nameless. They are voiceless non-beings, and history has paid little attention to them. They are angry, resentful and lonely.⁵

The minjung are those who have increased and occupied the ends of the earth, revolutionized the world, built societies, and advanced the course of human history. They physically make up the substance of, what we call, humanity. In other words, the minjung are those who eat the food produced by their own labor, who till and cultivate the soil, and protect their country and its culture not just with words but with their very lives.⁶

The minjung are the permanent reality of history. Kingdoms, dynasties, and states rise and fall; but the minjung remain as a concrete reality in history, experiencing the comings and goings of political powers. Although the minjung understand themselves in relation to the power which is in command, they are not confined by that power. The minjung transcend the

power structures which attempt to confine them through the unfolding of their stories. Power has its basis in the minjung. But power as it expresses itself in political powers does not belong to the minjung. These powers seek to maintain themselves; and they rule the minjung.⁷

Historically, the minjung is always in the condition of being ruled.⁸

It is also important to distinguish what the minjung are not.

the word minjung must be differentiated from the term paeksung, which denotes the common people who accept oppression and enslavement.⁹

It does not mean "Daejung" (mass) which implies impersonal and non-political nature. "Inmin" (meaning people in the sense when used in the People's Republic of...) does not fit because it is too narrowly ideological and political. "Proletariat" is no good either because again it is too narrowly ideological and economic. The term minjung has more personal as well as broader historical connotations in its Korean usage.¹⁰

As I reflect on these descriptions a number of observations occur to me. First the political nature of the minjung is significant. Though Marxist and Maoist terminology is eschewed by minjung theologians, these same writers, ^{like the Marx's} affirm a strong political self-consciousness on the part of the minjung.

Second the economic status of the minjung is left somewhat indefinite. Though it seems clear that professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and academicians would be excluded along with the wealthy and government officials, there is no injunction against tradespeople who, one would expect, could earn something more than a subsistence living. A good example would be the butchers who are presented as an example par excellence of the minjung class. Thus although the poor are certainly included, the minjung is not restricted to those who are in poverty. On the other hand there is a strong sense of being trapped in one's economic station in life

which pervades the descriptions of the minjung. Such entrapment sociologists have long associated with the term cycle of poverty thus describing an undesirable economic state from which it is practically impossible to advance oneself.

Third there is a solid theme of historical self-consciousness which runs throughout much of these descriptions. This is especially communicated through the claims of many minjung theologians that the minjung communicate the nature of their human situation through stories, poetry, humor and other folk art which has a distinct legendary character to it that bespeaks some sort of attention to geschichte which one does not necessarily expect to find in folk literature.

Finally I deduce that the minjung are the mass of people whose attention is focused almost exclusively on first order activities of human life. This is to say that they are involved with their full beings all day long on almost every day of their lives in the activities of working with their hands, caring for children, home-making, loving, arguing, resting, playing, celebrating, fighting, protecting, nurturing, etc. They have little time, inclination, or education for intellectual reflection or ideological policy setting. It is not that the minjung are unintelligent or uninterested in matters of ideology, science, or the humanities. Rather they are necessarily wrapped up in the business of living their human lives. Second order activities such as philosophizing or making pragmatic decisions regarding the direction in which to guide the society have little claim on their attention, either because they haven't the leisure for it, or because they do not see themselves as sufficiently empowered to actualize any of the fruits of such reflection.

WHAT IS HAN?

The concept of han is central to the thought of many minjung theologians. Once again I will record several definitions given by the minjung theologians themselves and then attempt a definition of my own.

Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of the total abandonedness ("Why hast thou forsaken me?"), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong--all these combined.¹¹

Han...might be translated as "grudge" or "resentment." Han is the anger and resentment of the minjung which has been turned inward and intensified as they become the objects of injustice upon injustice. It is the result of being repressed for an extended period of time by external forces.¹²

Han is the suppressed, amassed and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a kind of "lump" in one's spirit.¹³

han is the minjung's angry and sad sentiment turned inward, hardened and stuck to their hearts. Han is caused as one's outgoingness is blocked and pressed for an extended period of time by external oppression and exploitation.¹⁴

In the light of these definitions there are four basic characteristics of han. These are a) a strong emotional quality, b) the perdurance of the feeling, c) an external cause, and d) the need for resolution. Thus han might be described as intense human anguish caused when one's human development is stifled by external oppression: anguish which can only be relieved by a restoration of justice through the removal of oppression. Or to put it a simpler way, han is the righteous indignation of the revolutionary which motivates the overthrow of the oppressor.

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MINJUNG THEOLOGY

Professor Cyris H.S. Moon draws four primary parallels between the experience of the minjung of Korea and the minjung of the Old Testament--the oppressed Hebrew people. An important preliminary to this comparison is Moon's etymological approach to understanding the term Hebrew. He suggests that it is equated with the ancient near eastern word habiru which, he says, The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible "describes...as mercenary soldiers, people under treaty, and prisoners of war." Moon goes on to describe the habiru as "outside the dominant social system" and as "rebels standing in defiance of the prevailing social or power structure."¹⁵ Moon then asserts that "the habiru were part of the minjung of their time, driven by their han (grudge or resentment) to act against what they felt to be injustices imposed on them by those in power."¹⁶ In each of the following scriptural parallels, Moon draws on the experience of the Hebrew people in a particular period of their history.

The first such period is, of course, the Exodus. Moon cites the first step necessary in the liberation of the HEBREW minjung was the recovery on the part of the Hebrews themselves of their human dignity. They needed to overcome their slave mentality in order to become partners with God in confronting Pharaoh with a demand for justice. Moon asserts the necessity of this because "Yahweh cannot be the sole actor in the movement for liberation."¹⁷ Throughout his treatment of the Exodus, Moon asserts, along with other liberation theologians, God's special concern for the poor¹⁸ and the oppressed within their particular historical situation. He in fact asserts that the revelation of the divine name "should

be understood in the sense of 'you can take my presence as a guarantee for action on your behalf for the cause of justice and compassion.'"¹⁹

Following his discussion of the Hebrew minjung of the Exodus period, Moon draws corollaries with Korean historic experience. He cites the oppression endured by the masses (minjung) in Korea under the feudalism which dates from the beginning of Korean recorded history.²⁰ He further cites the negative effects on the minjung caused by the advent of Neo-Confucianism as the official religion in the late 14th century. The adoption of this philosophy as an organizing principle of Korean society led to the development of two distinct social classes: The yangban which was the ruling class and which was associated with the Confucian term Yang symbolizing heaven, and the xiang rom which was the lower class, designated by Moon as the minjung and associated with the Confucian term Yin symbolizing earth. Naturally heaven must take preeminence over earth, so in Confucian Korean society the yangban must dominate over the xiang rom or minjung.²¹

Finally Moon makes the point that the American Protestant mission found Korea very much mired in this two-class system when that mission began in the late nineteenth century. He claims that, at least at its inception, the Protestant mission focused its efforts primarily on the minjung as evidenced by several points of the Nevius plan including the translation of the Bible into Hangul the Korean vernacular spoken by the common people, and the specific targeting of evangelistic efforts towards the working classes and women.²²

Thus Moon states some significant parallels between the Hebrews of the Exodus and the minjung of Korea. He cites both as impoverished classes who are oppressed by a ruling class and who both experience the Living God as a liberator who empowers them to confront their oppressors and demand justice, thus experiencing the grace of God's gift of liberation.

A second scriptural basis on which Moon draws for his minjung theology is the experience of "The Hebrews in Premonarchical Canaan."²³ He compares three models of understanding Hebrew presence and predominance in Palestine prior to the kingdoms of Saul and David. It is evident that Moon is anxious to disassociate his Hebrew minjung from the Conquest formula so long held in regard to the military victories under Joshua and the Judges. Moon settles on the Revolt Model apparently because it explains the violence of the military victories under Joshua by proposing a revolt against an oppressive ruling class living in fortified cities by an alliance between the Hebrew minjung recently escaped from Egyptian slavery and the oppressed lower classes in Canaan. These lower classes lived in rural, mountainous regions and consisted of an oppressed agricultural peasantry and a collection of "social bandits and guerilla fighters" designated by Moon, of course as habiru. The walled cities of the lowlands were inhabited by a wealthy ruling class led by a "warlord" with a chariot army to whom was entrusted the maintenance of a tributary subordination of the region to the Pharaoh of nearby powerful Egypt. Thus the people of the land (habiru, minjung, peasantry, etc.) were twice-oppressed by "a double layer of hierarchical structures" including direct oppression by the local wealthy class and indirect oppres-

sion by the Pharaoh through the corrupt feudal system. The Revolt Model, therefore, postulates an alliance between various groups of habiru or minjung to overthrow the wealthy oppressors who inhabited the fortress city-states in the lowlands. It is highly significant that the "warlords" ruling these city-states are regarded by Moon as feudal lords whose fealty is pledged to Egypt. The military struggles of the books of Joshua and Judges therefore do not take place between necessarily conflicting cultures or ethnic groups. Rather they are battles fought for the liberation of the minjung from their oppressors--battles for which the experience of the people of the Exodus and the self-revelation of their liberator God provided a strong theological rationale.

Moon correlates this period of Hebrew history with the social struggle facing the minjung of post World-War II Korea. In his comparison he generally equates the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the North Korean government with Egypt; the Syngman Rhee regime with the Canaanite warlords; the Christians who escaped from North Korea with the Hebrews of the Exodus; and the minjung of South Korea with the habiru and peasantry of premonarchical Canaan. Thus he draws an oblique parallel between the Korean student demonstrations of April 19, 1960 and the military assaults on Canaanite walled cities recorded in the book of Joshua. He thereby equates the faith rationale of Yahweh as liberator-God for the overthrow of the Canaanite ruling class with the ideology of those Korean Christian³ who encouraged civil disobedience against the Rhee government.²⁵ Hence a further continuity between Old Testament theology and modern Korean minjung theology.

Moon's third testimony from the Old Testament is an analysis of Solomon as oppressive ruler. First Moon faults Solomon for attaining the throne through "birth and political influence" as opposed to the traditional route of proven personal "charisma" and "prophetic oracle."²⁶ Second the building of the temple is regarded as an "entrapment" of God and an oppression of the slaves and peasants on whose backs and with whose taxes the temple was built.²⁷ Further oppressive extravagancies of Solomon mentioned are the building of the "palace complex," the development of a large standing "chariot army" (the strategic forces of the day), the maintenance of a large federal bureaucracy, and the institution of large scale national labor conscription.²⁸

Moon sees parallels between the oppressive reign of Solomon and the recent Korean regimes of General Park Chung Hee and his eventual successor General Chun Doo Hwan. It seems likely that he is suggesting a parallel to Solomon's "unethical" rise to power in his citation of General Park's military coup of 1961. The parallels which he draws between the socio-economic condition of Solomon's Israel and South Korea from 1961 to the present, however, are unmistakable. The dehumanization of the labor force in Korea in service to the rapid economic growth of the nation is clearly intended to reflect the extravagance and subsequent abuse of the poor of Israel with which Moon accuses Solomon. This dehumanization includes low wages and inhumane working conditions for urban laborers, low prices for farmers, and substandard housing for the poor. He finally states in no uncertain terms that in the Korean Church, Yahweh the liberator God has been entrapped within an other-worldly religion which is "fundamentalistic, sectarian, ritualis-

tic, and formalistic," in much the same way as Yahweh was entrapped
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in the temple religion of Solomon.

The fourth and final Old Testament source for Minjung Theology explored by Moon is the historical matrix for the ministry of the prophets. He cites the prophecy of Amos against a "ruling elite" guilty of slavery; unreasonable rates for taxation, rent, and interest on loans; oppression of debtors; bribery and other corrupt judicial practices; opulence; corrupt marketing practices; and
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finally the corruption of the religion.

The prophet Micah is cited as decrying a similar "situation of broken relationships and the systematic dehumanization of the majority by a privileged self-seeking minority through a sophisticated and inescapable economic exploitation."
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Micah speaks of this dehumanized majority as an oppressed class of "have-nots" which Yahweh refers to as "my people" and which Moon designates as
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"han-ridden minjung." Micah also accuses the ruling class of generating a "false faith and theology to justify their prosperity."

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Moon declines to draw further specific parallels at this point among oppressive practices of the ruling class in modern Korea. He does however claim that the concerns of Micah and Amos are the concerns of modern minjung theologians in Korea, and that these theologians must, like Micah and Amos, stand on the side of the oppressed, identifying with the "minjung" both by speaking with and for them in their struggle and by sharing with them in the plight of their economic oppression.

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE KOREAN CHURCH AND THE PROTESTANT MISSION

WITH THE MINJUNG OF KOREA

The view that the Protestant Mission in Korea specifically targeted the minjung for evangelism is defended by Kim Yon²-bock by a quotation from the first article of the Nevius Plan which states: "It is better to aim at the conversion of the working classes than that of the higher classes." This aim was particularly fulfilled

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in a number of ways. First the schools which the missionaries opened in 19⁸5 for young girls and boys were filled, not by the yangban children but almost exclusively by children of the lower classes. The use of hangul, the Korean vernacular, for the

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translation of the Bible and other Christian literature was also instrumental in gaining access for the missionaries to the lower classes and in funneling missionary efforts towards ministry to and among these common folk. Finally Kim Yong-bock and L. George

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Paik opine that the lower classes were particularly attracted to Western Protestantism because the power and prestige of the West, the egalitarianism of western culture, and the content of the Christian faith all promised a relief from the failure and oppression of the old Confucian social order.

Out of these auspicious beginnings wherein the early Korean Church was so closely aligned with the socio-economic underdogs and their plight, a messianic understanding of the ministry of the Korean Church has been gleaned. Kim Yong-bock is a leader among minjung theologians in interpreting the history of the Church in Korea as a messianic movement. This is to say that he sees the Gospel being primarily addressed to, identified with, and responded to by the minjung, the least empowered class in Korean society.

This group of people have suffered the most from the long history of tribulation endured by the Korean people through centuries of feudalism, Confucian class oppression, Japanese imperialism, and Communist aggression. These minjung are the people most prepared to resonate with the identity of the suffering servant--the real historical, human suffering of Jesus on the cross. The minjung are those who have the most to hope for as they wait for the coming of the messianic kingdom. It is precisely because they know suffering so intimately, and because their hope for a better world is so intensely motivated, that both the Korean Church and the minjung have been so instrumental in carrying forward such progressive social movements as the March first Independence Movement.

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CRITIQUE OF MINJUNG THEOLOGY

My response to the offerings of these theologians is necessarily ambivalent. There is much to commend the efforts of these writers to address the social injustice and human rights abuses in their country and throughout the world. The perspective which they offer has merit. On the other hand there are some Biblical and theological problems which are raised by their thinking which need to be challenged. Therefore the following critique will contain both affirmation of the strengths and criticism of the weaknesses of this theology as I have come to understand it.

I will take first the Biblical commentary of Professor Moon. Regarding his point on the habiru, it is true that the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible states that Moon's suggestions regarding both the lower-class and/or rebel designation of the habiru and the association of the term with the Hebrews are indeed probable. On the other hand, the same article says that the social

class denotation of the term "is very uncertain" and notes "how completely scholarly opinion diverges on practically every point" of the entire "problem of the habiru. Thus the point seems strong enough to bear some theological reflection along the lines which Moon pursues. It is not, however, strong enough to foundationalize any theory in the absence of further substantial evidence.

Moon's exegesis of Exodus should be upheld in his understanding of Yahweh as the God who takes special concern for an oppressed group of people in a particular historical situation by working justice for them. This is an undeniable interpretation of the Exodus story. On the other hand the suggestion that the people must act for themselves and that "Yahweh cannot be the sole actor in the movement for liberation" is pure "Moonshine." The people--the minjung do not confront Pharaoh at all. Moses, a former member of Pharaoh's court does the confronting. The role of the minjung throughout the Exodus is portrayed most typically and comprehensively in Exodus 14:11-14. Here the people murmur against Moses and declare their preference to slavery in Egypt to the dangers inherent in rising up in confrontation. Their sole expression is fear of Pharaoh's troops. Moses does not say to them "You must act as God's partners in claiming your own liberation." Rather he says "The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be still." Thus the point that God cares especially for the oppressed and acts for their liberation is a good one which the text will bear, but the idea that the oppressed must rise up themselves and be "actors" and "partners" with God in the battle for liberation is a concept which the text specifically contradicts.

I found Moon's Revolt Model for the interpretation of the settlement of Canaan to be the most intriguing and promising concept in his book. The Conquest Model of this settlement has always seemed to me filled with gratuitous violence justified only by the iniquity of these Canaanites and the mandate of Yahweh for their utter destruction. The suggestion that what actually took place was an uprising of the oppressed people of the land in concert with the liberation of the Hebrews, all against the common oppressor Pharaoh and his minions, is one which bears considerable further investigation. However, the problems presented by the text of the book of Joshua are imposing to say the least. The conquering of Jericho and Ai for example is warranted because "the LORD has given all the land into our hands" (Joshua 2:24) and not because of their oppression of the poor. Everyone in both towns is slaughtered with the sole exception of Rahab the harlot and her family. The text does not indicate that she is spared because she is one of the minjung. The text plainly states that her life is spared as a trade for the lives of the spies she saves (Joshua 2:14, 6:17 and 25). Furthermore the testimony of the spies in Joshua 2:24 is not "The habiru in the hills are waiting for us to lead them in revolt." Rather the text says "the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us." Moon's primary way of dealing with these two battles is to suggest that there is no archaeological evidence that they ever happened. My response to all of this is that if he intends to argue from Scripture, then he needs to interpret what is in fact present in the text and not wave away (on the basis of an argument from an absence of archaeological evidence) those elements of the text which are inconsistent with his conclusions.

Moon's characterization of the building of the temple and the institution of temple worship in Jerusalem shows a similar lack of faithfulness to the Scriptural text. The clear testimony of II Samuel 7 and I Kings 8 and 9 is that God has chosen Jerusalem and mandated the temple worship "that my name might be there."

There is however considerable warrant for entertaining Moon's estimation of Solomon as oppressor. His assessment of the forced labor and excessive taxation is accurate, and the whole rebellion which takes place upon the ascension of Solomon's son Rehoboam gives a strong indication that the reign of Solomon was indeed oppressive laying a "heavy yoke" and "hard service" on the people (I Ki. 12:4). Furthermore the wisdom of the advice of Rehoboam's counselors to honor the request of the people to "lighten [their] hard service" is clearly affirmed by the author. The instances of God "raising up" adversaries to Solomon in I Kings 11 also supports Moon's contentions.

Finally, Moon's treatment of Amos and Micah is a faithful representation of their rebukes of social injustice which is in clear violation of Yahweh's covenant with his people. Although here as with Solomon and in other places, Moon has not sufficiently echoed the scriptural emphasis on the turning to other gods of which Israel and Judah have been guilty, he has rightly rendered God's rebuke of the ruling class who have broken the covenant by oppressing the poor.

Thus wherever Moon and other Korean Christians see injustice and the oppression of the poor, it should be granted that they have a solid scriptural mandate for denouncing the oppressors and defending the oppressed. One must, however, make sure that one does not

do violence to the Scriptural texts in an attempt to express that mandate. One must also guard against eisegesis which would serve to validate actions such as armed rebellion which hardly fall under the heading of standing still and seeing the salvation of Yahweh.

Concerning the historical advocacy of the lower classes exhibited by the Korean Church and the Protestant Mission in Korea, much of what Kim Yong-bock says is self-evident. The Nevius Plan did indeed advocate targeting evangelism especially among the lower classes, and what he says about the use of hangu and the lower class enrollment in the mission schools is all quite consistent with other accounts of the Protestant Mission in Korea such as that of Martha Huntley.

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There is another way in which Huntley comments on the testimony of Kim Yong-bock and other minjung theologians who advocate and applaud the Church's struggle for the liberation of the minjung from class oppression. Her story about Sam Moore and the Butchers reveals both the liberation which the gospel proclaims for those who suffer from class oppression and the role of the Protestant missionary in working for that liberation. On the other hand it is also clear from this same story that the yangban upper class was also evangelized and welcomed into the church. Thus it should be noted that the Church in Korea as the Church everywhere must minister to all people without "respect of persons," and that the Church must minister to all people our sisterhood and brotherhood in Christ to the abolition of all class distinctions and oppressions.

The minjung understanding of the Church as messianic movement is not merely another liberation theology used to justify an armed

revolution or marxist takeover. Kim credits the Korean Church with inculcating a theology of the transformational work of the Holy Spirit in effecting works of repentance and regeneration within both the individual and society. This understanding of the work of the Spirit is a dynamic concept which promises "a process of radical transformation" which deals "with the basic structure of the human person." It is unlike both Confucian self-cultivation and Christian fundamentalist legalism which are static modes of conformity to a set of pre-established norms. But far from being simply a reaction against old ways and strict disciplines, minjung messianism expresses a Biblical hope in the overcoming of evil and oppression through the gracious actions of the Living God. This is to be realized both eschatologically at the second coming, and historically as the minjung are responsive to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit accepting their creaturely identity as subjects of their own history and challenging all forms of injustice.

Finally it is necessary to critique the concepts of the identity and role of the minjung and their han. It is undeniable that there is in every culture a large segment of the population which is unempowered politically and economically and who often suffer as the result of systematized oppression. It is equally undeniable that Yahweh cares for these people and their suffering and that the ministry of Jesus Christ is largely one of advocacy for their liberation (see Luke 4:18-21). What is most significant about the writings of the Korean minjung theologians is that the history of the Korean people, as they repeatedly say, is, indeed, largely a history of a group of people struggling to live fulfilling human lives under a seemingly endless string of oppressors,

whether those oppressors be indigenous feudalistic lords or foreign imperialists. It seems highly appropriate that such a theology as this should come out of the Korean experience.

There are however certain claims which are made for the so-called minjung which seem spurious. Chief among these is the idea of a strong political and/or historical self-consciousness. This seems antithetical to the whole ethos of a people whose entire efforts and attention are focused on the day-to-day business of life. It is certainly true that there are political realities associated with the minjung and that many artists, politicians, and theologians articulate these realities. It is also true that the satire of the upper class in such folk art as the Mask Dance surely expresses the han of the minjung. To say, however, that the minjung themselves have an inherent experience or articulation of this political consciousness goes way too far.

Finally it is necessary to critique the concept of han. It is undeniable that the poor and oppressed everywhere and in all times experience intense emotional anguish as the result of their unrelenting suffering. It is also undeniable that this anguish often fosters a grudge and desire for revenge against the oppressor in the hearts of many of the oppressed. The gospel addresses this human anguish both through God's redemptive act of liberation and through eschatological hope. The Christian faith urges all who believe to work actively for justice for the oppressed. What is problematic in the minjung theologians' concept of han is their contention that this emotion should be and in fact is the calling of God's Holy Spirit for the oppressed to rise up and overthrow

their oppressors. Jesus teachings to love your enemies and to turn the other cheek cannot be applied selectively to the rich and powerful. Jesus himself was an unempowered member of an oppressed class of people. He suffered injustice peacefully on the cross making a statement of selfless love which, on its own merit, has done more for the transformation of human life than any class revolution ever has or will.

In conclusion it is necessary to say that minjung theology indeed has much to teach the Church regarding the cry of the oppressed for justice, from which we must learn about the gospel, and to which we must respond in obedience to the gospel. It is also of critical importance, however, to make sure that when we do theology and base our Christian practice on that theology, it is requisite for our theology to be truly Christian that we do our Biblical exegesis carefully and with integrity, measure human experience honestly and realistically, and in all things be guided by the Spirit in faithful response to the Law of God and the Grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By this we know that we are all included under sin, and that we all can only be redeemed by God's redemptive act.

This is a religious paper. I am impressed by the way you combined an objective fair treatment of the subject with a rather scathing critique of its methodology and a sympathetic appreciation of some of its major conclusions, with a recognition of many of its arguments. Good analytical treatment!

May I have the paper? It's worth keeping.

Notes

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3
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4
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6
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8
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9
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10
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12
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- 18
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Omer Degrijse, *Going Forth: Missionary Consciousness in
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3rd World

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"Western missions have had problems from excessively emphasizing their denominations, nominal converts, poor advice often given from ulterior motives, putting vast amounts of money into non-evangelistic projects such as hospitals and schools, the pride of triumphalism, and maintaining a disparity of living standards between themselves and the people they try to reach.

"But our problems are the exact reverse. Our poor economy, and inadequate man-power come to the fore. We have inferiority complexes rather than pride; we struggle to maintain small mission projects, rather than big organizations; and we must save face because of our missionaries' poor financial support, rather than any problem of economic disparity."

3rd World Missions



response ABILITY

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RESPONSE-ABILITY is an occasional publication of the Division of Corporate and Social Mission which seeks to share perceptions and judgments on current social issues, critical mission challenges and emerging trends confronting the church, as it witnesses in word and deed, individually and corporately, to God's Word in the world today.

This summer 1984 issue is dedicated to the centennial anniversary of the Protestant mission presence in Korea, an event we celebrate this year. From that perspective, this issue of RESPONSE-ABILITY attempts to do two things: (1) it seeks, in retrospect, to discern those critical elements in the original Korean tradition which joined with the particular way in which the Christian message was brought to that country to make the Korean Church one of the most dynamic church communities in the world; and (2) it also attempts to identify within the historical experience of the Korean Church those elements whose meaning transcends the Korean scene and, because they are of universal significance, address us, the church in the U.S.A., with a powerful Word of Judgment and Grace.

WITH
THE
MINJUNG
(PEOPLE)
OF
KOREA:

ONE
HUNDRED
YEARS
IN
MISSION
TOGETHER

한국국민종교
한글
100년
선교백년
공동체

WITH THE MINJUNG (PEOPLE) OF KOREA:

한국민중과 함께
선교백년

The meaning of the centennial celebration of the Presbyterians in Korea is brought out by what is perhaps the fact of the greatest importance for the mission of the church today: the emergence in the 1950s and 1960s of a new world church community out of the breakup of a colonial structure of the world that had lasted through World War II. During those two fateful decades, forty-eight new nations rose from the underside of history to impact the world system with their agendas. As these new nations emerged onto the world stage, so also did the churches that had developed in those former colonial settings.

This new world church is an amazingly vital and vibrant church, visible and vocal, with a distinctive theology of its own, couched in the theological vernacular of the Third World. That theology represents the fruit of the day-to-day struggle of the Christians in those lands to interpret the Gospel to their contemporaries. Through preaching, teaching, song, story, dance and drama, these churches in former colonial settings have inserted the Gospel into the living situation of their people. They have related the Gospel to the living questions their people are asking, not so much about the past, as about the future. The Korean Church, as it emerged out of thirty-six years of Japanese colonial domination, is an illustrious example of this new world church.

A dialogue has been developing between this new world church and the churches of the "Old Christendom," a dialogue in which we, the churches of the West, are addressed by a powerful Word of Judgment and Grace, spoken to us by the Third World churches. In this dialogue, we, the churches of the West, have much to learn. In this dialogue, we will be transformed on both sides.

Minjung Theology

As one seeks to understand Korean Christianity, in its homeland as well as in its overseas diaspora, an important clue is to be found in particular in Minjung Theology. This orientation of a significant part of the Korean Church, beyond doubt, has contributed much to making of Christianity the historical fulfillment of four-thousand years of Korean cultural tradition. Minjung Theology, which provides the central theme to this summer 1984 issue of RESPONSE-ABILITY, expresses the historical experience of a church that identified itself

with those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, and alienated socially. It was the theology of a church that consciously opted to use the *Hangul*, the despised and neglected Korean vernacular script over against the Chinese, the accepted medium of the educated and powerful.

Differently from Latin American Liberation Theologies which owe a debt to Marxist analysis, Minjung Theology arises out of the cultural soil of an original Korean tradition that spans over four millennia. *Minjung* is a Korean word composed of two Chinese characters: *Min* meaning *the people*, and *Jung* meaning *the mass*. Literally, then, it could be rendered into English as *the mass of people*, or *the common people*.

Central to Minjung Theology is the figure of Jesus Christ which gives that theology a strong evangelistic projection. The countenance of the Jesus of Minjung Theology is that of one who, in the midst of suffering and death, rejoiced in the life of the common people. It is the Jesus who wept and laughed with the common people. It is the Jesus who did not refuse the very costly perfume poured on him by a beautiful woman. It is the Jesus who, at a gravesite in Nazareth, shouted: "No, he is not dead!"

Equally central to Minjung Theology is the figure of the common people – a people that, in its unending struggle against the powers of death, does not become cynical nor see itself defeated. Many stories are told of Korean students who, beaten up by the police, did not beg for mercy. Though brutalized by a repressive government, these students have not thereafter rejected justice and love. Even when silenced by the government's overpowering repressive apparatus, these students continue to harbor a deep, abiding sense of joy. Though tortured and subjected to long jail sentences under most harsh conditions, they are full of life. Korean Christianity, a Christianity of the common people, has learned the wisdom of life and joy from its students, its labor movement, from the *Minjung* – the oppressed people of Korea.

Minjung Theology has made its own many of the symbolic motifs that have originated in the millenary culture of Korea. A case in point is the symbolism of the Korean masked dance which, in Minjung Theology, becomes a vehicle carrying profound theological meaning. The Korean masked dance is a village ritual in which the little people, the common people, join in dancing. As they gather in the dance, they shout together, they laugh together. They laugh at the pretensions of political and religious rulers. From within the dance, a prophetic voice arises, the same voice of the angry prophet of Israel.

Another example is the taking into Minjung Theology of the category of *Han*, the resentment of the wronged and oppressed, which is a traditional Korean cultural motif steeped in the folklore of the common people. How this original material is reworked in Minjung Theology can be seen in the adaptation of several literary sources, such as Yun huong-kil's *Changma* (or, *Rainy Season*), a popular

ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN MISSION TOGETHER

novel in which the *Han* of the wronged young farmer who is taking to the hills to join the resistance against the oppressors is transformed into a snake – an interesting twist on the middle-eastern biblical symbolism attached to the snake.

Korean Challenge to the American Church

This Korean Christianity of the common people presents a special challenge to the American church. That challenge is, at least, on two fronts.

On one hand, Minjung Christianity highlights by contrast the predicament of a prosperous American church. In the light of the American church's close identification with the dominant American sub-culture of success, Minjung Theology raises beyond a doubt a critical mission question for a church such as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). On the other hand, the Korean Christianity of the suffering people presents us in the U.S.A with a galling reminder. We realize how deeply implicated we are as a nation in the present sad state of affairs of South Korean civil and political liberties, because of our overwhelming military presence in that country for two generations.

As to the first challenge, it might seem, at a superficial level of analysis, that, as in Minjung Theology, we in the U.S.A. also speak the language of the people and make their categories ours. However, the portion of American Christianity of which we are a part ordinarily lacks, that theological perspective of the poor and the oppressed which Bonhoeffer used to portray as "doing theology from below." Thus, our cultural relevance is often uncritical. It lacks that element of challenge, that dialectic cultural distance, which enables Minjung Theology to speak for the poor and the oppressed.

For the Gospel to be heard as relevant in society, it must speak of things that are real in the lives of its hearers. It must, therefore, begin by accepting issues and models as these are culturally offered. This the church does well enough in our American culture.

But relevance is not enough. The Gospel must, at the same time, challenge the whole worldview of its hearers. It must cause them to question things they have never questioned before. It must bring them to the place where they hear spoken to their whole world of understanding and experience that Word of Judgment and Grace which marks the end of one world and the beginning of another, a death to the old and a new birth. Therefore, this is the question that Korean Christianity presses upon us: Is it because the critical relationship of the Gospel to American culture has been so blunted that we, who have seen ourselves for so long as the guardians and sustainers of that culture, are now impotent to challenge the central philosophy of our society?

The same question can also be put in another way. An enormous amount of American theology has been pre-occupied in recent years with the question of restating the Gospel so as to make it relevant to a post-modern culture. The historical experience of the Korean church underscores for us again that such a restatement can be done in one of two ways.

It can be done by embracing modernity or post-modernity

*Wishing fervently for Peace
Stepping on this fiery hot earth
The soles of my feet are burning*

Moon ik-kwan

as the fundamental frame of reference providing the models and the axioms into which the Gospel is to be fitted. In our American culture, the pressure that the restatement be done in those terms is pervasive. We are under a continuous barrage, from the Right as well as from the Left of the American church-and-society continuum, to undercut the currency of the Gospel.

By contrast, Korean Christianity shows that such a restatement can be done in a truly missionary way. Standing within the tradition of Christian faith, worship and discipleship, and taking the biblical axioms as fundamental, we can seek to bring the Word of God to bear upon all that comes to expression in our culture. The historical experience of a genuinely evangelistic church, such as the Korean, shows that standing squarely within the tradition of historical Christianity does not in the least mean advocating a biblicist fundamentalism, because both fundamentalism and liberalism are the twin products of the Enlightenment rationalism.

What the Korean Church presents as a challenge to us is a kind of discipleship that is open to one's culture as well as to the testimony of Christians from other cultures. Such discipleship is totally committed to obedience to Jesus Christ as he, in the countenance of the poor and the oppressed, leads us along the way of the cross. Korean Christianity reminds us that only to such discipleship the promise of the Holy Spirit is given, both to convict the world and to lead the church into the truth.

The second front on which Korean Christianity challenges us is where it makes us take responsibility for the consequences of the pervasive military presence of the U.S.A. in that country for two generations. Of the two wars that the U.S. has fought in Asia after World War II, the first was in Korea where, from 1950 to 1953, the U.S. poured over one million people and \$50 billion in an armed struggle against the Communist forces of North Korea. The American military presence, inclusive of nuclear weapons, continues in Korea.

The American role in the transformation of South Korean society illustrates the adverse effects a dominant, outside military presence can have in a Third World country, even when that presence is meant as a bulwark against aggression from other sides. The nature and extent of that negative effect, as exemplified in South Korea, can be highlighted by just a few references.

There have been in South Korea two military coups, in 1961 and 1979-80, none of which was justified by a serious national crisis. After each coup, all political parties were abolished for a time, and only reinstated in token form. Progressive tightening of political surveillance, steady disregard for human rights and due process of trial and punishment, have come to characterize present day Korean society. The militarization of the South Korea social order has been further advanced by the pervasive infiltration of traditionally non-military institutions and careers by military personnel.

There is no doubt that gross human rights violations and the indefinite blocking of political democracy in South Korea

have certainly not been sought by the United States and, at times, they have even been actively opposed by the U.S. authorities. Yet, the irony of a policy that intended "to make the world safe for democracy" and which has resulted in a pervasive and sustained abridgment of political and civil liberties is a humbling one for us in the U.S. The churches and the universities are the only remaining arenas of open dissent in South Korea.

Korean Dynamism

As one considers the prospects for church and society in South Korea, a sign of hope is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the repressive character of a deeply militarized social order, South Korean society has been rapidly and dynamically changing. It is this very dynamism of that society, exemplified in its church as well as in its economy, which will at the end make it impossible for the military to control society for an indefinite period.

This dynamism is very visible in the Korean church. Both

in its homeland and as a diaspora in Japan, the U.S.A. and elsewhere, the Korean church has been developing a wealth of multiple and complex relationships with the Christian world community, from whose life and mission the Korean church freely draws and to which it also abundantly contributes out of its many strengths. A church such as that cannot be bottled up by an authoritarian government, nor can it be kept frozen in that quietist "Babylonian captivity mentality" of Japanese occupation vintage which still characterizes large sections of the membership.

In a parallel way, an increasingly more complex, sophisticated and internationally-oriented South Korean economy, whose values and priorities are shaped in the market place of the world, cannot for much longer be contained by force at home.

It is therefore under these signs of hope that we, in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), salute the Korean Christian community in its homeland and in its overseas diaspora and join with the whole People of Korea in the celebrations of the first centennial anniversary of the implantation of Protestant Christianity in the peninsula.

Heart's Fire

Heart's fire —
forest fire in howling wind
flame and burn!
Flare up as sword from pursed lips
piercing painful flesh
tearing out every joint!
Heart's fire —
rather be an ocean,
long cold night on wooden floor,
an ocean of fire,
spewing flames of oil,
scattering soot, blackening empty sky.
Heart's fire —
stream of blood through valley snows
swell and flow!
Not just fists,
not just fists that strike me,
oh, fire in my heart,
burn, flaring, wailing!
I'd rather be an ocean baring teeth,
scattering soot, blackening empty sky,
I'd rather be an ocean of fire.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT of the Church of the Minjung

I: The Early Background

According to tradition, Korean history dates back to 2333 B.C., when *Tangun*, the son of a bear, founded the Kingdom. In early history, it appears that tribal communities developed and matured in three states: *Koguryo* in the North, *Silla* and *Paekche* in the South. It was during this era, known as the Three Kingdom Period (57 B.C. – A.D. 668), that Korean recorded history began. During this period Buddhism was introduced into Korea by the Chinese.

By 668, with the help of the T'ang Dynasty in China, *Silla* had unified Korea. However, in the latter part of the 19th century, the power of the *Silla* Dynasty began to be weakened steadily. There were several reasons for this decline. The hereditary nature of the government positions had resulted in a ruling elite which was restricted to members from a few clans. These family factions were constantly vying for power and influence, weakening the central government.

Out of all of this political chaos, a new leadership finally emerged. In 918, Wan Kon defected his opponents and founded the Koryu Dynasty. He immediately instituted several new ordinances and reforms. One such change was in the land ownership system. All property was declared to belong to the government and the high officials. Another group that received land from the government was the Buddhist priesthood. During this period Buddhism reached its height of power. This aristocracy supported Buddhism because it promised happiness for the ruling class, Buddha's protection for the king. The priests gradually became powerful landowners, and their influence on political decisions greatly increased. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Buddhist priests controlled much of the national economy and became *de facto* rulers in many areas.

From 1219 to 1392, the country was in deep trouble. In 1219, the new Mongolian leadership in China invaded Korea and *Koryu* became a tributary state. In the midst of this political turmoil, many ruling elites and Buddhist priests began to exercise their power. This led to excessive exploitation of the *Minjung*, especially the peasants, which in turn resulted in rebellion and unrest.

Because of all these problems, the government desperately tried to institute several reform programs. These programs had a two-fold purpose: (1) revitalization of the nation after almost a century of Mongol domination; and (2) elimination of the social and political abuses of the *Minjung* for which the Buddhist priesthood was held responsible. The persons initiating the reforms were the Confucian scholar-officials (*Sadaebu*) – those who had obtained their positions by passing the civil service examinations.

In 1392, *Yi Songgye*, the newly risen military leader overthrew the *Koryu* dynasty, thus founding the *Yi* dynasty. *Yi* immediately turned the new administration over to the *Sadaebu*, who then instituted their numerous reform programs. All of the estates were confiscated and redistributed to those who had been loyal to *Yi Songgye*.

In addition, Buddhism was deemed unacceptable as the official religion; Confucianism, or more accurately, Neo-Confucianism was substituted. There were several reasons for

this change. Toward the end of the *Koryu* period there was a definite deterioration in the moral and spiritual leadership of the priests. As they grew wealthier and more powerful, they became more corrupt. And in order for the new dynasty to retain its position and increase its own power, it was imperative that the Buddhists lose their influence and power. The administration confiscated all temple property and forbade all Buddhist activities. Not surprisingly, this change received wide support. An anti-Buddhist movement had already started in the late *Koryu* years, as a result of the resentment generated by the priest's manipulation of power and wealth.

Thus, the switch from Buddhism to Confucianism was for most of the *Minjung* a welcome change. But the shift to Neo-Confucianism was not beneficial for the *Minjung*. Basically two classes of social stratification emerged. They were *Yang ban* (mainly *Sadaebu*, i.e., ruling class people) and *Xiang-rom* (slaves, landless peasants, powerless and lower class people).

The Korean Confucian scholars believed that the universe was comprised of two forces: Light and Darkness, Heaven and Earth, Male and Female. These forces were called *Yang* and *Um*. According to these scholars, *Yang*, which symbolized heaven, was superior to *Um*, symbolizing earth. As long as this natural hierarchy was obeyed, the human world and the cosmic order would be in balance, and society would live in harmony and peace. If this hierarchical system was not followed, a state of barbarism and chaos in which human desires have no limit, would result. Thus, according to the Confucianists, a harmonious and orderly society could only exist when a *Minjung* had a fixed position and had a superior (meaning *Yang-ban*) to serve.

Confucianists also taught that the female was created especially for the purposes of procreation and of giving pleasure to the male. They insisted upon the inferiority of women, placing them in the same class as slaves and referring to them as *Xiang-rom*. Here we should identify *Xiang-rom* as the *Minjung* of the time.

From the reign of the King *Sungjong*, (1469-1494) the classical scholars emerged as a new force, and the number of the ruling class increased. And again from the reign of the King *Kusanhaegun* (1608-1623), many independent middle class farmers and wholesale dealers became part of the ruling class. Yet the two distinctive classes of social stratification were evident until the end of the *Yi* dynasty in 1910. In this kind of politico-socio-religious context, Christianity was introduced to Korea in the year 1884.

During the latter years of the *Yi* dynasty, there were many important political events that took place. There was much social unrest and many political revolts by the *Minjung* against the ruling class. Among them, one event deserves special attention. That is the *Tonghak* Rebellion. Among the *Yang-ban* class, the selling and buying of government positions was a common practice. Anyone who purchased an official position would generally reimburse himself through extortion. Taxes and levies were increased by local and national governments until they reached three or four times

the legal rate. Extravagance, licentiousness and debauchery were the order of the day at the court.

The tears of the *Minjung* fell like the drops of the candle falling on the banquet table. As music swelled in merry-making, so increased the outcry of the discontented *Minjung*. The suffering *Minjung* could no longer remain silent. In 1895, the Tonghaks (mainly poor peasants) rose in rebellion in the South. The Tonghak movement has both a religious and a political significance. Because of the oppression of corrupt officials, they were determined to resist unto death the corruption of the officials who oppressed the *Minjung*. This may be called a truly indigenous *Minjung* liberation, a religious movement.

II: The Formative Period

When Dr. Horace N. Allen, the first missionary of the Presbyterian Mission Board, came to Korea in 1884 he did not bring God, as it were, in his sandwich bag. God was in Korea from the beginning of creation and God had been working in Korea. Dr. Allen had courage, vision, and a sense of calling. He came to Korea to be a partner with the Koreans to work for the extension of God's Kingdom. In fact, the first Korean Christian was *Yi Ungchan* who was baptized by Rev. John MacIntyre in the year 1876 in Manchuria. This was eight years prior to Dr. Allen's coming to Korea.

The year 1884 was during the *Yi* dynasty period. One of the policies of the *Yi* dynasty toward the West at that time had been that of *Choksa Chongwi* ("Expel the Wrong and Defend the Right"). This policy was evident in a series of persecutions of the Catholics (who came to Korea in 1784) and in an uncompromising closed-door policy toward the Western powers. The official ban on Western religions was not lifted. Therefore Dr. Allen arrived in Korea in September 1884 through the "back door" of the American legation, which appointed him the legation doctor. With his Western medical skills, he gradually gained the favor of the royal family and laid a foundation for future mission work. On April 5, 1885, Rev. M. G. Underwood, a Presbyterian missionary, and Henry Apenzeller, a Methodist missionary, and his wife joined Dr. Allen. As time passed, the missionary community grew and carried out a considerable amount of medical work.

The next breakthrough for the American Protestant mission was the opening of a school for girls in 1885. The doors that the missionaries could open through education were for girls (who were considered to be inferior creatures) and also for boys of the *Minjung*. The sons of the *Yang ban* were not attracted to those schools.

Since Christian evangelism was still banned, the work of the mission had to be among the *Minjung*, and it had to be a secret and underground work. The early missionaries tried to gain the favor of the government, to be cautious and patient in doing their work, to gain the confidence of the government and the people. Thus, on the one hand, the missionaries' community was using the good offices of the American legation and, on the other, they were slowly penetrating the lower class, i.e., the *Minjung* of the Korean society.

However, there was a major breakthrough for the missionaries. They found the *Hangul*, the Korean vernacular script, despised and neglected. They picked it to study, using it to communicate to the *Minjung* of Korea. Thus, the medium of their language was the language of the *Minjung*, although they found the Chinese language was the official written

language of Korean officialdom and among the *Yang ban* class. Thus, the medium of *Hangul* encouraged and facilitated the contact of the Christian message and of its bearers – missionaries with the *Minjung* in Korea. This was the beginning of the process of rehabilitating the language of the Korea *Minjung* who were oppressed, exploited, alienated, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. Then, the first great event took place in Korea: the translation of the Bible into *Hangul*. The translation of the New Testament began in 1887 and by 1900 the whole Bible was translated into the Korean vernacular language. Other books and tracks were also published; and the circulation of these and the Bible became the most effective strategy of the missionaries in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In January 1893, the early missionaries adopted a very significant mission policy, which was called the "Nevius Method." The four articles of the policy are as follows:

- (1) It is better to aim at the conversion of the working classes than that of the higher classes.
- (2) The conversion of women and the training of Christian girls should be a special aim, since mothers exercise so important an influence over future generations.
- (3) The Word of God converts where man is without resources; therefore, it is most important that we make every effort to place a clear translation of the Bible before the people as soon as possible.
- (4) The mass of Koreans must be led to Christ by their own countrymen; therefore, we shall thoroughly train a few as evangelists rather than preach to a multitude ourselves.

After the *Tonghak* movement (1895) was crushed by the government, the countryside was wide open for missionary penetration. Missionaries went deep into the countryside and made contacts with the *Minjung* who were associated with the *Tonghak* movement. Then Christianity was accepted by the *Minjung* in fighting for justice, equality, and human rights. Christianity became a politically oriented faith and a religion of hope and power for the oppressed and suffering *Minjung*.

During this period the major emphasis of Korean Christianity was to achieve equality of human rights, and social justice for the Korean people. The *Minjung* were enlightened and inspired by the analyses of current situations and problems. They were stirred up against the administration and illegal judgments of government officials. An important historical event of the Korean Christians was the "Common Meeting" of a cross section of the *Minjung* with common concerns.

There was a butcher whose name was *Park Song-Chun*, belonging to the *Xiang-rom* class who attended the meeting and became a Christian. Later he led the "Butcher's Liberation Movement" from 1895 to 1898. He was one of the founding members of the *Seungdong* Presbyterian Church in Seoul. These gatherings of the "Common Meeting" spread throughout the countryside.

Since the missionaries had to do itineration to reach the *Minjung*, they had to train more Korean Christian leaders who could go with them. Thus, Dr. Samuel A. Moffett founded a theological institution (which is the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Seoul) in 1901. The missionaries gradually ceased to be pioneers and to do direct preaching to the *Minjung*. They became the organizers or managers, directing and supervising the Korean Christians' evangelistic

enterprise. They would make occasional trips into the countryside, visiting newly organized churches (which used the "Comon Meeting") and administering sacraments.

The Korean churches widely used the Bible as a very important tool for evangelizing Korea. The Bible became the greatest factor in evangelization. The Korean church derived her power, her spirituality, her great faith in prayers, her liberation from the fact that the whole church was saturated with knowledge of the Bible. The Bible study and training classes constituted the most unique and most important factor in the growth of the Korean Church.

The *Minjung* in Korea responded to the Christian message. The motives and reasons for the response, in great measure, were to alleviate their social and political condition. This was true particularly after 1895. Certainly, because the Christian message gave some hope to the *Minjung* (the outcasts), political oppression was another cause for the increase in believers. The *Minjung* felt that they had reached the bottom of misery.

III: The Japanese Occupation

The year 1905 was a fateful year for the Korean people. That year Korea lost its independence and sovereignty and became the protectorate of Japan. The Treaty of Protectorate robbed the Kingdom of Korea of its diplomatic rights to deal with foreign powers. The Japanese established the office of governor general under the Korean king to control the Korean government. For the Korean people this meant that their historical contradiction was no longer merely an internal

social contradiction, but between the Korean people and the Japanese power. Independence and the expulsion of Japanese power from Korea became the main concern of the Korean people.

In this political situation, Korean Christians were not exempt from a sense of national crisis and national humiliation and an intense anti-Japanese feeling. The missionaries also felt keenly the estrangement between the Korean people and the Japanese which seemed to presage a general uprising. They not only understood the hopelessness of fighting against the Japanese Imperial Army for a lost cause, but also foresaw the danger of making the young Christian church a political agency. It seems that missionaries were successful in de-politicizing the Korean Christian through mass revival meetings. The main features of the several revival meetings held in 1907 were the confession of sins after a sermon convicting the people for their sins, loud prayers, and various forms of collective emotional expressions. These revival meetings brought a deep sense of fellowship among Christian communities and a moral transformation of individual lives. However, the Christian message was no longer geared to the social and national crisis of the Korean *Minjung*, but was limited to the rigid and narrow definition of the salvation of the soul. The Korean Christians' aspiration for national "salvation" was completely ignored; and the

missionaries' tight control of the Korean Christian community stifled the dynamic and the autonomous Christian "koinonia" which could have responded better to the historical predicament.

August 29, 1910, was a day of national humiliation for the Korean people. This was the day when Korea was formally annexed to Japan. The Korean people lost their country and became enslaved as subjects of the Japanese military rule. The *Yi* dynasty formally ended and the right of government was transferred to the Japanese Emperor.

The Korean people never accepted the authority of Japan as legitimate. For the Korean Christians, political neutrality was not possible whether they were in the church or outside of it. Living under the oppressive Japanese rule was inevitable suffering for a powerless *Minjung*.

Under the extreme conditions of political oppression, economic exploitation, and social alienation by a foreign regime and internal control by the missionaries, the Korean Christians had no positive outlet to express their feelings and aspirations other than in their dream in the Biblical language. But those dreams were not empty dreams; they were powerful for their historical self-understanding. Here, Korean Christians found the God of the Exodus most meaningful for their historical condition. For example, a preface to a Sunday School lesson states:

"The Book of Exodus is written about the powerful God, who liberated the people of Israel (interpreting it as Korean people) from suffering and enslavement, and made them the people who enjoyed glorious freedom; God appeared as Yahweh before Israel, and as the whole and just God. God exists by oneself and of oneself, God has sympathy, and God is the Saviour. Exodus is the book of the miracle of God's liberation of the people of Israel from the power of Pharaoh (interpreting him as Japanese Emperor) with God's power. God has saved Israel first and established it holy. This book is a foreshadowing of the redemption love of Jesus in the Gospels and of God's power that cleanses, that is, the miracle of the grace shown forth."

The struggles of the Korean Christians for independence and social justice were persistent despite the regulation concerning meetings (1910) and that of guns and explosives (1912). The continuing efforts of the Korean Christians' struggles became the spiritual backbone of the March First Independent Movement of 1919. From 1896 to 1898 many intellectuals, merchants, and industrialists organized an Independent Association. With the help of the *Minjung* who participated in the *Tonghak* movement in 1895, the Independent Association formed a society which later led the March First Independent Movement. These people had the consciousness of the struggle of the *Minjung* for liberation. Perhaps, this movement was the broadest in scope of the *Minjung* liberation movement. Of the people who constituted the movement, peasants were 48 percent; Christians, 22 percent; and ordinary men and women in their twenties, 30 percent. With 22 percent Christians, we could say that the Christians provided much of the leadership of this movement. Unfortunately, the March First Independent Movement was crushed by the Japanese Imperial Army.

The Japanese government strongly enforced the policy of Japanese ultranationalism in Korea. According to that policy all values and institutions come under the Imperial
(continued on page 10)

(South) Korea

People

Population (1983): 40 million.

Annual growth rate: 1.6%.

Ethnic groups: Korean; small Chinese minority.

Religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Shamanism, Confucianism.

Language: Korean.

Education: Years compulsory, 6; Number of students: 9,951,000. Attendance – of those eligible, 91.65% attend middle school, 56.8% high school, and 13.9% college (1980). Literacy – over 90%.

Health: 1 doctor/1,554 persons (1979). Infant mortality rate – 32/1000 (1982). Life expectancy – 68 years (1979).

Work force: (14,722,000 in 1982): Agriculture, forestry, and fishing – 30.6%. Mining and manufacturing – 22.4%. Services – 47%.

Geography

Area: 98,500 sq. km. (38,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Indiana.

Cities: *Capital* – Seoul (1980 pop. over 8 million). *Other major cities* – Pusan (over 3 million), Taegu (1.7 million), Incheon (1 million), Kwangu (727,000), Taejon (651,000).

Terrain: Partially forested mountain ranges, separated by deep, narrow valleys; cultivated plains along the coasts, particularly in the west and south.

Climate: Temperate.

Government

Type: Republic, with power centralized in a strong executive.

Independence: August 15, 1948.

Constitution: July 17, 1948; revised 1962, 1972, 1980.

Branches: *Executive* – president (chief of state). *Legislative* – unicameral National Assembly. *Judicial* – Supreme Court and appellate courts, Constitutional Court.

Subdivisions: Nine provinces, four administratively separate cities (Seoul, Pusan, Incheon, Taegu).

Political parties: *government Party* – Democratic Justice Party (DJP). *opposition Parties* – Democratic Korea Party (DKP), Korean National

Citizens Party (KNCP).

Suffrage: Universal over age 20.

Central government budget (1983 projected): Expenditures, \$13.9 billion.

Defense (1983 est.): 6% of GNP; about one-third of national budget.

Armed forces (1982): About 600,000 active.

Flag: Centered on a white field is the ancient Chinese symbol of yin and yang, a divided circle of interpenetrating red (top) and blue (bottom), representing the union of opposites. At each corner of the white field is a different trigram of black bars, symbols of the elements from the ancient pan-East Asian *I Ching* or "Book of Changes." Together, the yin-yang and the four trigrams represent eternal unity.

Economy

GNP (1982): \$65.944 billion.

Annual growth rate (1961-81): 8%.

Per capita GNP (1982): \$1,680.

Consumer price index (1982 avg. increase): 7.3%.

Natural resources: Limited coal, tungsten, iron ore, limestone, kaolinite, and graphite.

Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries: 18.1% of 1982 GNP. *Products* – rice, barley, vegetables, fish. *Arable land* – 22% of land area.

Manufacturing and mining: 35.3% of 1982 GNP. *Products* – Textiles, footwear, electronics, shipbuilding, motor vehicles, petrochemicals, industrial machinery.

Social overhead capital and other services: 46.5% of GNP.

Trade (1982):

Exports – \$23.5 billion: textiles (\$5.4 billion); transportation equipment (\$3.4 billion), base metals and articles (\$3.1 billion), electrical products (\$2.1 billion), footwear (\$1.2 billion), fish and fish products (\$0.8 billion). *Major markets* – U.S., Japan, European Community, Middle East.

Imports – \$24.3 billion: crude oil (\$6 billion), grains (\$0.9 billion), machinery (\$4.4 billion), chemicals and chemical products (\$1.8 billion), base metals and articles (\$1.7 billion), transportation equipment (\$1.4 billion). *Major suppliers* – Middle East, Japan, U.S.

Official name:

Republic of Korea



(North) Korea

Official name:

**Democratic
People's
Republic
of Korea**

People

Population (Jan. 1980 est.): 19 million.

Annual growth rate: 3.2%.

Ethnic groups: racially homogenous.

Religion: Religious activities essentially nonexistent since 1945.

Language: Korean.

Education:

Years compulsory – 11.

Attendance – 95% (est.).

Literacy – 95% (est.).

Work force: (6.1 million):

Agriculture – 48%.

Other – 52%.

Geography

Area: 121,730 sq. km. (47,000 sq. mi.).

Cities: *Capital* – Pyongyang.

Other cities – Hamhung, Chongjin.

Terrain: Numerous ranges of moderately high and partially forested mountains and hills separated by deep, narrow valleys and small cultivated plains.

Climate: Warm and sunny summers, cold winters.

Government

Type: Communist state, one-leader rule.

Independence: September 9, 1948.

Constitution: 1948, revised 1972.

Branches: *Executive* – President (Chief of State); Premier (Head of Government).

Legislative – Supreme People's

Assembly.

Judicial – Supreme Court, Provincial, city, county, and military courts (subordinate to Supreme People's Assembly).

Subdivisions: 9 Provinces, 4 municipalities, 3 special urban districts.

Political parties: Korean Workers (Communist) Party.

Suffrage: Universal at age 17.

Flag: Two blue horizontal stripes, top and bottom; two white narrow stripes; and a wide red center band on which appears a red star in a white circle.

Economy

GNP (1978 est.): \$10.4 billion.

Annual growth rate (1978 est.): 7.2%.

Per capita income (1978, in 1975 U.S. dollars): \$570.

Natural resources: Coal, metallic ores, iron, zinc, lead, gold, silver, tungsten, molybdenum, hydroelectric power.

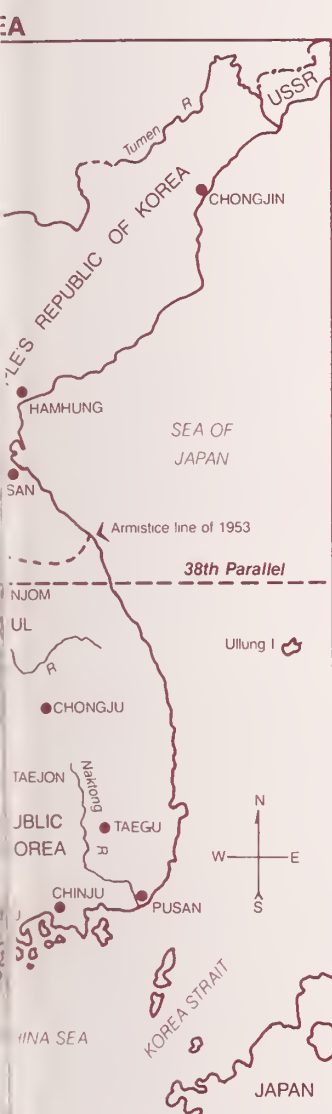
Agriculture: *Products* – rice, corn, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, tobacco. *1978 gross weight* – 6 million metric tons.

Industry: *Types* – mining, steel, cement, textiles, petrochemicals, machines.

Trade (1978): *Exports* – \$965 million: machine tools, semirefined metals, chemicals.

Imports – \$900 million: machinery and equipment, petroleum, foodstuffs, coking coal.

Partners – USSR, China, Japan.



(*The Historical Context, continued from page 7.*)

Authority of the Emperor. Hence, the government, the military, business, all truth, beauty, and morality belong to the institution of the Emperor. The infamous Education Rescript was an open declaration of the fact that the Japanese state, being a religious, spiritual, and moral entity, claimed the right to determine all values. This was the spirit of Japanese national policy which was combined with the doctrine of the divinity of the Emperor. This belief, championed by the Japanese military as the holy army of the Emperor, launched the mission to bring the "light of the Emperor" to Korea.

The Korean church moved into a new political situation from the 1920s. The oppression, exploitation, and alienation of the Japanese government toward the Koreans became very cruel. Physical tortures and imprisonments were common practices. The missionaries at this period were products of the early 20th century fundamentalism and they knew only to emphasize the "salvation of souls." Also, in order to do their mission work, they found it necessary to collaborate with the Japanese authorities. Yet, toward the end of World War II, they were expelled from Korea. Now the Korean church had to carry on her mission by herself. The Christian persecution continued with the end of World War II in 1945. We may characterize the Korean church as the following:

- (1) She lacked an historical consciousness;
- (2) She yielded to the enforcement of worship at the Japanese Shrine (Shintoism);
- (3) She was under the sway of fundamentalistic dogma and imported theology; and
- (4) She became a captive to those who were striving for ecclesiastical authority. Evidently this was the period of the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Korean church history.

IV: The Contemporary Church

The 36-year-long Japanese role in Korea ended after World War II when the country was divided with the Americans holding the South and the Soviets the North. Prior to 1945, North Korea held the majority of Christians in the undivided country. With the division, many of these Christians fled to the South. Many who remained, suffered persecution. Practically nothing is known of the church or of the activity of Christians in the North today – except in the negative. In other words, what is known is that no church buildings are in use, no public worship is allowed and no Christian activity is identified. However, unofficial reports indicate that there are home gatherings of Christians, apparently on lines similar to the house church movement that survived in China through the Cultural Revolution there. Nothing is known of their number or the nature of their activities. However, in South Korea, the situation is different. The Korean church is one of the fastest growing churches in the world today.

In 1948, with American support, Dr. Syngman Rhee became president of the Republic of Korea. America withdrew its military forces from Korea in 1949. On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded the Republic of Korea. The war continued until 1953, even though Armistice negotiations began in July 1951. Syngman Rhee continued to serve as president until April 1960, when university students and others, rioting in protest against irregularities in the presidential election of that year, forced him to step down. The new National Assembly named Dr. Chang Myon prime

minister. His government was ousted in a military coup in May 1961.

During the Korean War and the political turmoil, the Korean church was still in the "Babylonian Captivity." The leaders of the Korean church were overwhelmingly fundamentalistic, sectarian, ritualistic, and formalistic. Most Protestant churches have not changed their beliefs, attitudes, and theologies for forty years (1928-1960). In spite of significant contributions toward self-awareness and nationhood by the church, the majority of the leaders were not influenced by the contemporary trends of the world church. Furthermore, the feeling of regression which occurred during the Japanese occupation continued to dominate the mood of the church even after the liberation of the nation. The church lacked a guiding concept in a changing world. Due to strong foreign influences, indigenous theology was not developed. "The other world" and "salvation of souls" fundamentalism discouraged any meaningful social involvement of the church. As a result, the Korean church was alienated from the society, and contributed very little or nothing at all toward the issues of social justice. Nevertheless, the Christian community grew and the estimated numbers were 1,000,000 church-goers, of which many were refugees from North Korea.

Then the political atmosphere was drastically changed. After two years of military government under General Park Chung Hee, civilian rule was restored with the advent of the Third Republic in 1963. Park was elected president in October 1972. One year after he was re-elected for the third time, Park proclaimed a national emergency. He initiated a series of reforms to cope with domestic and international situations, including an amendment to the constitution enabling him to run the country for a further six years. On October 26, 1979, Park was assassinated and Choi Kyu Hah became president. While the power was maintained by Gen. Chun Doo Hwan, Choi released political detainees and promised a series of political reforms. Student demonstrations turned to violence and there was a major insurrection in Kwangju. Choi resigned on August 15, 1980, clearing the way to power for Gen. Chun Doo Hwan, who was elected president on August 27, 1980.

During the Park and Chun regimes, there was a very rapid economic growth. The basis of this high growth was a heavy dependence upon foreign capital and technology. The main axis of the growth was export-oriented industries of the labor-intensive kind. Such a priority emphasis on industrialization in economic strategy brought about imbalance, dependence, and many other serious problems. Because the development process was dominated by the government, there arose a phenomenon of centralization of power. The consequent low-wage policy for laborers and low-price policy for agricultural products brought about the *Minjung's* discontent. This unhappiness in turn brought political repression, which is the opposite of democratic political development. There rose also serious social problems: a widening gap between the rich and the poor; a deepening of the socio-economic gap between the rural and the urban areas; rapid urbanization; massive migration of the rural population into urban centers, especially Seoul; sacrifice of the rights and welfare of workers; ecological disruption; and other invisible social costs. Cultural values lost were restriction of freedom of speech and publication, caused by the concentration of power in the hands of a few. This resulted

in the wide-scale suppression of intellectual freedom.

As of now the Korean church has a real tension between the two types of Christians. One group is still holding on to the fundamentalist belief of Christian life. This group is still in the "Babylonian Captivity" of the years between 1920-1960. While these Christians are not interested in the social and political affairs of life, they are enthusiastically evangelistic. They believe in prayers. Almost without exception, every church holds before daylight prayer meetings daily. They fast often and hear high pressure preaching. Their prayers are for personal petitions and for the conversion of relatives. Intercessory prayer for others is almost nil. Another important aspect of this group is the charismatic movement which has spread considerably in most churches. It appears that the main reason their fundamentalist belief has not changed is that many Christians know the risk involved in a struggle for freedom. Persecutions under the Japanese, under the communists for many from the North, and under the present totalitarian regime, have forced them to be realistic about church and state. One of the major criticism should be directed to their naive understanding of the Christian truth. The principle of the separation of church and state must include the right of disobedience. But they have failed to

Christians in North Korea

Since the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the Church of North Korea has experienced serious trial under the Russian occupation and later Communist regime. The Church opposed the policies of the newly established Communist regime which was considered to be atheistic. On the other hand, the Communist government perceived the Church to be an extension of U.S. imperialism. By 1953, when the Korean War ended, the churches in North Korea virtually disappeared, and many Christians fled to the South.

There have been many changes in Asia during the last 30 years. In China the Church that appeared to be completely wiped out during the Cultural Revolution, opened its doors, and the number increased to several hundreds today, with two theological seminaries open. We believe that a new history of the Christian Church has been wrought in the late Twentieth Century, and that God will be able to do the same work in North Korea. In fact, what happened in the People's Republic of China will also be true of the People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).

In recent years, a gradual change has occurred in North Korea. A small number of overseas Koreans, including Christians, were given special opportunities to visit their long separated families in North Korea. A number of Americans including Mr. Stephen Solars, U.S. Congressman, have visited North Korea. A minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was invited to visit North Korea in 1982, and was allowed to bring Bibles and hymnals. He took two hundred Bibles and 150 hymnals, and presented them to the Christians in Pyongyang. The Government in North Korea officially recognizes that there is no church, but Christian worship services are reported to be held on Sundays in homes.

The question of the continuity of the Christian Church in North Korea and of the forcible separation of ten million Korean families are matters of the greatest concern for the Church in South Korea and in the U.S.A.

understand fully the meaning of this principle and their duty to prophesy and to follow the exemplified life of Jesus Christ.

Yet there is another group of Christians who have not only emphasized the evangelistic aspect of spiritual life but also the "missio-dei" concept. Out of some 8,000,000 Christians in 200 denominations (61 registered with the government), more than 3,000,000 Christians belong to the six major denominations who have membership of the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC). They hope and pray that the Korean churches get together to witness to the great mission work of God and to manifest the commitment of the whole Christians in Korea to the cause of the further expansion of God's Kingdom. This is the real spirit of ecumenism. In order to achieve that goal, since the 1960s the following issues have been considered, even though not yet realized:

- (1) First of all, the Western church-centered relations must be overcome and churches in the so-called mission field must realize their authentic subjecthood.
- (2) Maturity and autonomy (self-determination) should be fully respected in relations and cooperation on the international level. This means that international justice as well as Christian solidarity are integral to the ecumenical relationship.
- (3) Ecumenical relations and cooperation of churches on the international level should be set in the context of secular ecumenical relations with *Minjung* in different nations, and this should also be firmly based upon theological and historical foundations. This means that inter-church relations should include inter-*Minjung* relations for justice and peace.

Since the 1970s, Korean churches have actively participated in Korean society through their pronouncements and actions. The area of participation has been those of social mission and human rights. This social mission includes rural mission, industrial mission, urban mission, and mission work among students and intellectuals. Especially the human rights movement of the Korean churches has forced strong solidarity linkages with democratic forces in the Korean society at large. The missionaries from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Uniting Church of Australia, the United Methodist Church in America, Canadian Presbyterian Church, and German Churches, have become co-workers with the Korean church leaders and with all Christians as partners in Jesus Christ. Together with the Korean church, they affirm that they believe in the same God, one Church of Jesus Christ, and one mission to carry out.

For quite some time, theological discussions in Korea were concerned with issues like indigenization, the thesis of secularization, or the scope of political theology. In early 1970 the theme of *Minjung* became a concern of Korean theology when theologians were invited to speak at *Minjung* mission groups such as the Urban Industrial Mission and the Korean Student Christian Federation. The theologians began to learn and reflect upon the experiences of mission work at the grassroots level. However, it was in the latter half of the 1970s that there was a concerted effort to articulate *Minjung* theology. Several articles were written on the theme of *Minjung* and published in various journals. Not all of these were theological. Quite a few were historical inquiries, and others were sociological studies. There were also studies of *Minjung* literature, drama, and art. Consequently, there were lively interactions between theological

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GOD'S PILGRIMS:

Korean Christians in the United States

One-hundred years ago, in 1884, American Presbyterian missionaries went to Korea to spread the seed of the Gospel. The promise of our Lord now has come true: the seed has come forth, the Church has been founded, schools established, hospitals built, catechumens baptized, the Lord praised, and the Word gone forth.

The Korean Church, however, had to experience many sufferings and pass through agonies such as colonization, the invasion by a Communist army, and political oppression. Out of the experiences of suffering and persecution, a spirituality has been formed which is grounded in Scripture, prayer, and a sense of community. The 100-year history of Christian mission and evangelism in Korea can be summarized by unbending faith in the living God – a faith that strongly resists all forms of human oppression – and evangelistic fervor.

Now, since the relaxation of restrictive immigration laws in 1965, there has been a substantial increase of Korean immigrants to the United States. According to statistics at the end of 1980, the Korean population in the United States has grown to approximately 500,000. The annual increase of the Korean population here is 25,000. It is predicted that the total will grow to 800,000 in the late 1980s and possibly reach one million in this century.

At present, there are 1,000 Korean churches and approximately 1,000 Korean ministers in the United States. It is estimated that a majority of the 1,000 congregations are, in a sense, Presbyterian. More than 230 of these congregations are a part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These Korean Presbyterian churches have come into the PCUSA as a result of its overseas mission in the past and present.

Each Korean church is serving an average of 650 Korean people in its location. Based on the expected 25,000 annual population increase, about 40 more Korean churches will be needed each year.

Koreans from many walks of life have immigrated to the United States, and for many reasons. Many come with religious convictions; some are ignorant in this area; others are indifferent. All of them have a basic human need for love, peace and life abundant. But now they find they do not control their own circumstances. They find themselves in a wilderness, living as aliens and strangers, and an inescapable question arises: What is the real meaning of their immigrant existence in America? What is the spiritual meaning of their alien status? "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137).

The biblical faith, however, presents Korean Christians the vision of themselves as a pilgrim people. Koreans in this country are called by God, like Abraham, to leave their homeland with dreams for "the land of promise." They live in a foreign land as "strangers and exiles," not feeling wholly at home where they are, nor being comfortable any more about returning to the land from which they came. But they are not wandering aimlessly. They have been called "to go out," with visions for a "better country." (Hebrews 11:8-10,

13-16).

Having left behind the security of belonging to just one culture, they are free to dream bigger dreams and to see larger visions than they might have otherwise. But while living as aliens and strangers in a wilderness is uncomfortable, their visions have an unshakable foundation, even God himself. They must, by God's grace, bring themselves to see and to appreciate a new image of themselves.

To go out from one's homeland and live on the cultural and social boundary means to be freed from the dominance of one culture or one society. As the bearers of the image of God, human beings never were meant to live within the confines of nationality or cultural heritage. Human beings can transcend such natural "givens," and dream higher dreams and see greater visions. The life of pilgrims therefore is like the night, when petty concerns recede into the background, giving way to more ultimate concerns and more significant aspirations. God wants his servants to be "in the world but not of the world." That is why, when Jesus called his disciples, they were asked simply to leave everything behind and follow him.

Because the Korean immigrants do not have any political power, they may be ignored and despised by the "principalities and powers" in society. They are powerless, but that is precisely why God has chosen them as special servants.

"Earthen vessels," Paul called the Christians. God can work and manifest himself through powerless "earthen vessels," because through them he can show "that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Korean churches in America have been taken out of the security of homeland situations. The churches have been forced to leave many of the institutional activities that were characteristic of their life in Korea. However, the congregations should not yearn for the old days. Korean churches in America need to move in new directions, adapt to new circumstances.

If there are no springs, one digs a well. If there is no ford to cross a river, one builds a bridge. If one has neighbors that are in need, one offers help. Likewise, if Korean congregations do not have a church building facility, they should find an alternative. The Korean congregations should discover anew that the church is a pilgrim people moving across time and space in participation in the mission of Jesus Christ.

The church realized after the death and resurrection of Jesus that it could not longer center its life on a fixed temple of stones, that is itself the living temple of Christ's moving presence. Therefore, the question is, how can the Korean churches, the people of God, move out with Christ into the Korean and American communities?

Once they have this vision, of a pilgrim people with creative potential and a special calling and responsibility, Korean immigrant Christians will be able to sing the Lord's song in this foreign land.

The Wish

It is a season of splendor
When the creeks break free to run
And pussy willows bloom; the buds
New greens, break through oppressing soil
The flowers, delicate, paint scenes of joy and hope
It was the same thirty some years ago
When one day, in a glorious season
I became a refugee, not knowing why

Yes, we had thought that it was done
And that the time had come
That we could be ourselves
The hosts of our own houses, in our land
But why have I become a refugee?
What crimes have I committed
That I have had to pack up like a thief
Collecting someone else's things
In haste, perplexity, all hidden
From the neighbor's eyes
Abandoning my home, my heart
To travel like a vagabond
Loathing my luggage
In the tide of the evening darkness
We went up to Wonsan for a boat
There was no boat
At least we had a truck we'd hired in Pyong-Yang
We drove along the coast
How beautiful the beaches of the land I left!
Myong Sa-Ship-Ri, the miles of white sand
The matching miles of untainted sky and sea
The smiling infant joy of innocence, the being
With the one, the changing and unchanging
The sublime, with a being all its own
How mystically serene, the far horizon
Luring always far away
As if it were whispering "Come to me!"
And shouting "Stay!" at the same time
We passed the pines, innumerable groves
Like parasols of green. They made my heart ache
The pains of life were born in me, so young a child
Who would normally play and laugh!

Then there was the magnitude and delicacy
Of the mountains of Keum Kang
How I wanted to jump from peak to peak
Playing hide-and-peek on each, and standing proud
I wanted to cry out to my heart's content
To listen to the trails of my own echoes
"I want to live like this!"
I have the right to live like this!"
Bang, bang, bang!
It is a river in our own country
That we were forced to cross. Hoping for luck alone
We rolled our skirts and pants up to our thighs
We were desperate
Some Russian soldiers fired at us. It was
our own river. It was a time of peace
Who were they, these Russians!

Someone high up gave an order

That order made a chain
That chain bound them and us
That chain bound him and me
"Do I know him? Have we met?"
If only I had met him face-to-face
It might have been different
We could have been friends . . . who knows?
We had no chance to try
Even before we could question them
They shot. We were their targets
Russians firing on Koreans
It is absurd
Is it a game? But how dangerous, and real
And yet I didn't envy them their posts
Those soldiers dangling at the end of the chain
And yet, at my endlessly vulnerable position
I wept
On the other side at last, we reached a hill
Escaping narrowly
We fled, were refugees, not knowing why
Just sitting on a southern hill
Just like a northern hill
I could not laugh at the triumph of escape
But only weep again
My laughter having been repressed
Before I was born

Help! Oh, help me and my people!
Someone said that all the refugees
Should go to the camp – a sea of people
I asked, "Is all of north Korea down here now?"
I saw Yankee soldiers for the first time in my life
They all had shiny shoes
Clean, pressed uniforms
They were clean themselves
Just out of the bath, perhaps
They all chewed gum relentlessly
They all held strange machines
They were spraying us with powder, DDT, as if to say
We'll rid you of the bugs and germs
You are carrying from the north."
As if to say, as well, "This rite
Will authorize you to live in the south
Like us civilized and free."
Was this their way of humanitarian benevolence?
We were all made white, baptized from head to toe
All white as flour-packers or as homeless nomads
Roaming in the dust. Weren't we the same
Once called the bourgeoisie
Who have been pushed into this plight?
Some bourgeoisie! We whose very lives depend
On excess grain from the USA!
Do I thank them? Curse them?
Oh, I cannot distinguish friend from foe!

This is how my "Freedom" and my "Dignity" began
This is how my "Politics" awoke in me
As my knowledge grows, our plight seems more difficult
As the dictators sing of "democracy"
They call "communist" whoever speaks of
"Rights," "justice," and "freedom"

And innocents are found, imprisoned, tortured, killed
 The schemes are devilish!
 To reinforce their power
 They loan us money, making their pockets fat
 With snow-balling interest
 While the weight of our country's debt
 Strangles the poor
 How dangerous this "anti-communism" is
 How mutable!

"Free the poor! Free the oppressed!
 Free them from the grips of a thousand demons!
 Jesus set the example: we are merely following
 His steps." They say: "You are the reds.
 You're communists, and dangerous."
 The Christians exiled by the Kim regime
 Are harrassed by the Park/Chun regime
 Where can we turn now
 With the Red Sea and the desert before us?

Oh, God help our people to build a bridge
 Over the Red Sea and straighten the road in the desert
 To come out victorious from the hell
 Of hatred and division, to be led in the land
 Of love, unity and peace!

Spring has returned again
 Thirty-five springs since I crossed that wretched border
 The thirty-eighth parallel
 So arbitrary a division in our history
 O Korea, where we each are born
 With marks of death, indelible
 Yes, it is another spring, another hope
 My days are turning round and round, and I can see
 The original point, but cannot get to it somehow
 My enemies are too many and too strong
 Oh, Korea! I suffer in my love for you!
 Let the day come, let me see it
 All — before my eyes, which have shed so many tears
 Have finally closed

여호와와 여! 어느때 까지니이까?

(The Historical Context, continued from page 11.)

reflections on the *Minjung* and secular intellectual efforts to articulate the reality of the *Minjung*.

The Asian Theological Consultation, held in October 1979, sponsored by the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference in Asia and KNCC, was a high-water-mark in the development of *Minjung* theology. At this meeting, Korean theologians, in dialogue with other Asian theologians, were able to clarify and push further the concerns of *Minjung* theology. There is an ongoing informal discussion group on *Minjung* theology involving about two dozen people from various theological disciplines. These conversions have inspired many books and articles on the theme of the *Minjung*.

In order to formulate *Minjung* theology, theologians, first of all, have tried to clarify the *Minjung* in Korean historical terms. In those attempts the social biography of the *Minjung* has been an important point of reference. In other words, the social history of the *Minjung* liberation movements (such as the *Tonghak* Movement, 1895 and March First Independent Movement, 1919), the *Minjung* religious traditions, and the past and present cultural expressions of the *Minjung* are all being studied. The other important reference point for *Minjung* theology is the Bible and Christian theology. *Minjung* theologians are keen to discover the socio-economic background of the Biblical texts so that these may be studied from a *Minjung* perspective. Of particular interest in the area of Biblical studies are the Hebrews (Habira) in the Exodus, the poor in the covenant code, prophetic traditions in the Old Testament, and the theme of the *ochlos* (crowd) in the New Testament. In the area of theology, special attention is being given among others to studies on theodicy, apocalyptic, the Suffering Servant, and the Messianic Spirit (Holy Spirit). The essential concern of *Minjung* theologians in using these two reference points is to interweave the Korean *Minjung* story and the Biblical story. In fact, Korean church history is being looked at again for evidence of the meeting together and interweaving of the two stories.

Being able to formulate her own indigenous theology, the Korean church has already begun to discern certain fundamental values. We see *Minjung* and the Korean church as subjects and not objects of history. Surely, during the last one hundred years, God has led the Korean church into the truth.

As the Korean church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ventures forward into a second century, these are some of the directions for the future:

The Korean church should emphasize *human* (body and soul) liberation as her goal, and the qualitative enhancement of the whole life of the Korean society to achieve this goal, the following tasks should be involved in her mission:

- (1) On the political level, the Korean churches should continue to work for the realization of democratic society and national unification, in which the participation of the *Minjung* is guaranteed;
- (2) On the economic level, the Korean church should try to form a self-reliant economy centering on the basic needs of the *Minjung* and the realization of their welfare.

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The One who "proclaims release to the captives"

Who "sets at liberty those who are oppressed"

Is still awaited in the prisons and camps

The Pressrooms and campuses

The factories and farms

Of Korea.

Let us remember the many prisoners of conscience

Languishing in Korean prisons.

Let us remember the numberless ones

Who toil in the Korean sweat shops,

Especially the "factory girls"

Who strain their eyesight on cheap electronic gadgets.

Let us remember the ones who serve at personal risk

In the Urban Industrial Mission of the Korean church.

Let us remember the students and their teachers,

The humble folk in the church

And their valiant pastors.

여호와와 여!

O

LORD

HOW

LONG

?

Psalm 6:3

언제때 까지니이까?

CREDITS

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선교백년

FOR FURTHER READING

Fire Beneath the Frost, edited by Peggy Billings, Friendship Press, New York, 1984.

This book tells of the struggles of the Korean people to retain their right of self-determination and their hope for the future. For this generation in Korea and for 100 years past the Protestant witness has been a part of this struggle. Prominent Korean and North American Church leaders offer a comprehensive look at the history, culture, religion and political realities that shaped Korea. Study guidance included.

Song of the Soul: In Celebration of Korea, by Lenore Beecham, Friendship Press, New York, 1983.

The joy of the diversity of the human family is celebrated by short studies of different aspects of Korean culture including poetry, art, folk tales, foods, festivals, dance, drama and religions. This is a book for all ages, a valuable reference book and study aid.

The Korean Immigrant in America, edited by Byong-suh Kim and Sang Hyun Lee, The Association of Korean Christian Scholars in North America, Inc., 1980, U.S.A.

What does it mean to be both Korean and American? This is the pivotal question dealt with in this volume of scholarly essays. The writers have responded to the question from a number of perspectives: sociological, psychological, pedagogical, theological and biblical. This book enriches our understanding of what it means to be a migrant people in a strange land.

The Wish – Poems of Contemporary Korea, edited by Lee Sun-AI and Don Luce, Friendship Press, New York, 1983.

This is a collection of practical voices from the farmers, the workers, the children, the men and women of Korea. It touches the heart of the readers, by moving accounts of their hopes, struggles, dreams and agonies.

Korea/Update and Korea/Action. Issued by North America Coalition for Human Rights in Korea.

Korea/Update summarizes recent political, economic and social developments in Korea, along with developments in U.S. policies toward Korea. Korea/Action, enclosed in Korea/Update, contains action suggestions, news from Korea-related groups and descriptions of recent resources. Quarterly 4-6 pages.

Liberty to the Captives by George Ogle, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1977.

This book tells of the suffering in Korea and the challenges Christians face there. It recounts the efforts of missionaries witnessing to factory workers by working and living with

them in the 1960s. It tells how the church's stand for basic human dignity brought it into conflict with industry and government.

Korean-American Relations at Crossroads, Edited by Wonmo Dong, foreword by Edwin O. Reischauer; published by The Association of Korean Christian Scholars in North America, Inc., 1982, U.S.A.

Collection of essays by experts on Korea-American relations.

Protestant Pioneers in Korea, by Everett N. Hunt, Jr. Foreword by Martin E. Marty, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1980.

This book gives a detailed account on the earliest phases of American Presbyterian and Methodist missionary activities in Korea and the response of the Koreans.

Minjung Theology, edited by the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia.

"Minjung Theology of Korea is one of the most creative theologies emerging from the political struggles of Third World peoples." In this book some of Korea's foremost theologians set out the substance of faith as confessed in Korea and bring out its Korean character.

Mission to Korea, by George Thompson Brown, Board of World Missions, Presbyterian Church U.S., 1962.

A detailed account of the history of the former Presbyterian Church in the U.S. missionary work in Korea. A good resource book to understand Korean history and its fast-growing church.

A History of the Church in Korea, by Allen D. Clark. The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971, Seoul.

This book gives general background on geography, history and the culture of the Korean people, bringing the figures on economic development to the end of 1970. Also, included in this volume is a number of the outstanding men and women who have been leaders of the Church in Korea.

Korean Patterns, by Paul S. Crane, Holly Corporation, Publishers, Seoul, Korea, 1967.

This book is the first in a new series of popular handbooks on Korea which is published by the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea, by Roy E. Shearer, William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966.

Case study of missionary activity in Korea by the Prebyterian and other major denominations, with consideration given to the religious, social, political and geographical situations affecting church growth.

QUEST FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND KOREAN CHRISTIANITY

by Park Hyung Kyu

I

I already told you of the excitement and jubilation of the event of Liberation in 1945, brought by the defeat of Japan. Most Koreans, especially Christians, in both north and south, called the invading American army the "Liberation Army." But soon after the invasion, we realized that the invading forces were not actually liberators, but indeed invaders--another big power imposing on Korea the system desired for its own interests. In the north, Soviet Russia sent its barbarous armies to harass and exploit the people. Soon Kim Il Sung and Soviet-trained organizers came to impose the soviet-type socialist system. The Stalinist oppression left no room for freedom of the people--certainly no freedom for the Christian mission! However, strong resistance was organized by Christian leaders and church people so that it was natural that they, along with the so-called bourgeoisie, should be be the first target of communist attack.

Communist suppression of freedom was so complete and brutal that it was impossible for any real Christian hope to survive. Only those who could accept communism as an absolute ideology, thereby offering up theology, the churches and the church systems as instruments of communist rule, could hope to survive. Compared with the churches in eastern Europe, the Korean church was too young to survive under communist rule. Particularly the Protestant churches, which had been so greatly influenced by American mission and ideology, found it impossible to conceive of any alternative stance to the American way *of life* and American ideology. The result was the elimination of Christianity in north Korea, especially during and after the Korean War. This, I believe, is one of the main differences between our churches and those of eastern Europe.

On the other hand, in the south, the invading American armies were regarded by the people as God-sent liberation armies, and Christians innocently expected every American soldier to be a Christian. Eventually Christians and the general public learned that Americans were not necessarily Christian. In fact it became plain they were actually more concerned about their materialistic interests and world domination, than about the Korean people's dignity and aspirations. But the real distrust of the people toward the American army came when the American military government decided to use as helpers persons who had cooperated with the Japanese, that is, people who were regarded as traitors, instead of using those who had suffered in the struggle for independence. Dr. Syngman Rhee was elected president with the support of the American Military Government. Syngman Rhee certainly was one of those who were in the forefront of the independence movement. However, Syngman Rhee himself had to rely on military and police forces trained by the former colonial Japanese government, in the course of eliminating his political rivals, accusing them as leftist.

Thus from the beginning, both in the north and in the south, the minjung's (common people's) hopes and aspirations were disregarded, and dictatorial systems which suppressed the common people were imposed. In south Korea the president happened to be a Christian, a Methodist, and many positions of importance and power in the government were held by Christians. Thus simple Christians thought everything was in good shape, and that it was their duty to support the government, which was headed by a Christian president and had many Christian officials. At that time there were many socialist-minded people around, and the first thing this dictatorial government did was to wipe out all these so-called leftists by bloody maneuvering, branding them communists. Among them was the famous ^{Protestant} independence leader Kim Ku, who was assassinated. But most Christians were on the side of those who persecuted the so-called leftists. Unfortunately, their stance was based on the simple

logic that "Americans are Christians, Christians are good, so if a Christian rules the country, eventually there will be social justice, peace and equality, no corruption, and all kinds of freedom." This naive logic and expectation was doomed to disappointment. The corruption of the Syngman Rhee government during and after the Korean War, rigged elections, and dictatorial oppression of dissidents during the 12 years of his rule, broke these innocent illusions.

II

The Student Revolution of April 1960 was the final stroke which awoke the Christians from their complacency and acceptance of the status quo. That revolution was totally secular with very few Christians involved, or at least with any leading role. There was a National Council of Churches in existence, but it had nothing to say either about the government's corruption, or about the Revolution.

I myself, as a young assistant pastor of a rather large church, was very much ashamed of my lack of concern, and of my blindness and deafness to the people's cry for justice. Many other concerned Christian leaders since then have become more sensitive to the issues of political and social justice and human rights. From that time on, I personally could no longer continue as an easygoing pastor doing ordinary pastoral work. I frequently engaged in student and youth movements, lay movements, Christian publishing and journalism. I was also able to interest a number of colleagues, as well as many seminary and college students, in a common concern for social justice. Attracted by our concern for social justice, they began to move to awaken the churches to a concern for renewal and Christian social involvement, especially through the labor movement, the student movement, the farmers' movement, urban poor organizations, etc. We came to this involvement in secular work because unless the church really becomes salt and light to expose the world's injustice and becomes the healing and liberating power for the oppressed, the common accusation that the church is the opiate of the

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~~Much for country~~

wealthy minority of society. Whenever the people's awareness of this injustice in society is awakened, it makes the unjust rulers become anxious, and they take more oppressive measures to control people in such movements. The late President Park Chung Hee's 18-year rule was an example of this vicious circle. It moved from oppression, to the people's awareness of injustice, to more suppression, and finally to his own miserable death at the hand of one of his most trusted associates. In October 1972, when Park Chung Hee declared Martial Law and enforced the so-called Revitalization System--the Yushin Constitution, suddenly we realized that the whole nation had become a huge prison. Every activity which criticized the government policies was regarded as pro-communist. From that time to the present, the word "conscientization", which we borrowed from Paule Freire, has been regarded as communist jargon, and the words "liberation" and "minjung" have been regarded as dangerous and subversive. We who were involved in community organization in urban slum areas, had to withdraw because of the possibility that we might be arrested as communist "fifth columnists" who had infiltrated into the poor area disguised as Christians. Thus we agreed that our first task had to be to gain political freedom which would allow us to be involved freely in ministry for the urban poor, without being suspected of being communist. So we started a new movement that might be called the conscientization of Christians and Christian churches.

III

I would like to describe an event which we did not consciously plan, but later clearly recognized as an event related to Christian mission and the people's struggle for justice. I described this event in my address to the World Council of Churches Sixth Assembly in Vancouver last summer, so some of you might have heard or read it.

It was the dawn of an Easter morning. Thousands of Korean Christians had gathered hurriedly and were hushed to watch the day break; to watch the morning sun break the darkness of death and to celebrate the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from death. That was the Easter Sunday morning of 1973, and we were then experiencing a long, dark night of death under a repressive military dictatorial regime. Korean Christians came to the hilltop, south of the city of Seoul, to see the day break, to pray for the light to come and end that long, dark night of sorrows, and to witness the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the life of the Korean people.

A handful of us, with several other ministers and myself, together with Christian students, had planned to march down the mountain following the Easter service, carrying placards and a wooden cross proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our political life. The resurrection of Jesus had to be proclaimed, not only on the mountain top; but it had to come to live in the city below. We wanted to urge our fellow Christians to overcome the power of death in our political life. In our leaflet we urged Christians to pray for freedom of mission, freedom of speech and democracy, so that our people could live and work and speak like human beings with dignity and their God-given rights.

We thought our demonstration would be an act of overcoming the cruel force of death, because at that time, we lived like the dead. There was no freedom of speech: that was the death of language; there was no academic freedom: that was the death of our souls and our spirits. We had only the freedom of silence, but sometimes even that freedom was taken away--some of us had been forced to support the powers of death. We were determined to challenge death on Easter Sunday morning; we wanted to shout for freedom and democracy and the resurrection of Jesus as we sang and marched down the hill. We tried to break the silence of death, the silence of the quiet resurrection of Jesus; we dared to confront the political power of death.

Even before we started the march, our placards were confiscated, our wooden cross was broken in pieces by the police, and all of us fled and hid ourselves. Sooner or later, most of us who participated in this event were

taken to the military interrogation agency and some of us were taken to prison. The whole event, I thought, was a failure. Very few Christians were able to get hold of our leaflets; very few of the Easter worshippers saw the cross broken by the police, and no newspapers in Korea printed the happening. Worst of all, no Christians at the Sunrise service cared to join in our Easter march.

That seemed a failure. So we experienced another death. I was put into solitary confinement. I felt my body become musty in the basement cell. I smelled the rotten stench of death in the rainy season of the long, hot summer of Korea. But I began to see clearly that I was not dying; we were not failures.

In that summer of 1973, while I and my assistants were being tried for our so-called attempt to overthrow the government--the trial lasted for about three months--many of my friends: pastors, professors, young people, students, and even a Buddhist monk attended the trial. Through listening to the questions and answers at the trial, most of my friends not only became confident of my Christian sincerity, but also gained a desire to join the struggle for liberation from the Park Chung Hee dictatorship. They began to hold prayer meetings at the Methodist Center near the courthouse at nine o'clock every Thursday, just prior to the ten o'clock court session. This eventually became the official Thursday or Friday Prayer Meeting sponsored by the Korean NCC.

In 1974 when I was arrested again, this time in connection with youth and student protests against the dictatorship, besides the young people, many other young pastors and professors sent to prison along with me. There were also Roman Catholics in the group, including poet Kim Chi Ha and Bishop Chi; Professors Kim Dong Kil and Kim Chan Kuk from Yonsei University were also in the group. So the number of so-called dissidents was increasing. Many non-Christian groups, such as fired reporters, joined us. Then the March First,

1975 Declaration of Democracy was issued at Myongdong Cathedral by a joint group of Protestant and Catholic clergy and laity, and even a few Christian politicians, notably Kim Dae Jung and Yun Po Sun. When I began my protest in 1973, I never dreamed the movement would grow so widely and become such a strong threat to the iron-fisted government of Park Chung Hee. Of course, I recognize there are many Christian friends outside the country connected with World Council of Churches and various National Councils, and many individual Christians who are concerned for the struggle for freedom and human rights, and who give us great encouragement and support. We are grateful for the support of the churches in the U.S., Japan, Canada and West Germany, as well as many other European Christian communities. We do not forget young Asian churches also who support us through the Christian Conference of Asia.

IV

Through all our struggles for liberation, I strongly feel that the power which liberated the people of Israel from Egypt and guarded the small Christian catacomb community under the Roman government, is present with us in Korea. The Holy Spirit has helped us to stand up and say "No" to the evil power that would crush our self-identity and impose its ideology of power upon us. We have come to realize that those who are engaged in this struggle are not brave, but on the contrary, quite weak persons who had no competency for their new role.

We remember how Paul said, "God uses the weak to confound the strong." One of our Korean leaders, the Quaker Elder Hahm Suk Hon, used to say that those in our struggle for liberation are ones "who have been kicked onto the stage by God, and once there are forced, reluctantly, to perform." Perhaps it could be compared to the way clowns perform to make people laugh, yet sometimes revealing deep truths. Another example of this might be our Korean mask dances. In any event, God uses these clown-like people to conscientize not only Christians, but the general public.

Many young secular students turned to the church--Catholic and Protestant-- and those who were imprisoned because they were engaged in the protest movement started to read the Bible. They found there a basis for the hope for liberation. They also read theological books, especially the books of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Surprisingly, many of Bonhoeffer's writings, including his Letters and Papers from Prison, were translated by non-Christian students and published by non-Christian publishers. It is interesting that in the early days of the movement the government officials did not know who Bonhoeffer was, and his books found their way into the prisons, but later they began to learn who he was and to realize that his writings were dangerous for students to read, and banned them from the prisons. The same thing happened to Martin Luther King's writings. Nowadays, all books related to the subject of social justice and liberation are excluded from the list of books allowed into prisons.

It is also interesting that the students who were imprisoned--usually for a term of one to five years, while a few convicted as communists had much longer sentences, and some are still in--these students come out of prison, not weakened by their experience of hardship, but rather more determined than ever, and better equipped and much more mature from the deep thinking they have done, and often with a newly found Christian faith for even better participation in the liberation movement. The movement is not really directed or guided by any person or group. I firmly believe that it is the work of the Holy Spirit making Korean history--a history of the struggle for the minjung's self-identity and liberation.

Strangely, in the later '70s, as the oppressive measures became more rigid, the power of resistance also became more consolidated, with greater solidarity among the various groups. A natural cohesion developed between Protestant and Catholic leadership, expelled politicians, fired professors, fired journalists, fired union workers and URM people. In 1979, one symbolic

action was taken by the YH Trade Union. It was advised by the Korea Christian Action Organization to go to the NDP (the opposition party) headquarters to appeal the case. To expel the young women who were sitting-in at that building, and to prevent a political party from joining with a labor group, Park's government sent in police. Their brutal methods of removing the union members from the building resulted in the killing of one of the young women workers, Kim Kyung Sook. In the aftermath, the president of the NDP, Kim Young Sam, was illegally expelled from the National Assembly and banned from political activities. This incident was directly connected with the uprising in Pusan and Masan, which in turn led to the eventual death of Park Chung Hee.

V

From the time of Park's death up to the Kwangju incident, there were several months of "springtime" for Korean democracy. Of course, there were sudden bursts of free speech, free press, free demonstration and gatherings. All those actions were very self-restrained and orderly so that no one could accuse those involved of being disorderly or violent. This orderliness, self-restraint and self-discipline was the result of the training under the dictatorship during the '70s. But this self-restrained and orderly request for a new democratic constitution and human rights made the successors of Park Chung Hee's rule all the more anxious and uncertain as to how to turn this democratic tide so as to maintain the succession of military rule. They had to have an excuse. So student demonstrations were blamed as disorderly and violent. Professors were accused of agitating the students to take to the streets to demonstrate against the police. And the Kwangju uprising was the best excuse for the military takeover. The people's liberation movement was soon crushed by the global forces of evil which are afraid of the people's freedom and ability to govern themselves.

Down through history, from Bible times, the rulers have always thought of the common people, the minjung, as being dangerous to national security.

needing to be ruled by an iron fist, always held down to a subordinate level. The common people are brainwashed to regard themselves as incompetent to govern themselves, or else to accept it as their fate that they must be dominated by the strong. On the contrary, the oppressed and poor of a society have the possibility of new hope and energy for changing the injustice in their society.

Just before April 19, 1980, not long before the Kwangju incident, I was invited by the Seoul YWCA to speak on the theme, "Is the Spring of History Coming to Seoul?" I said "No," because at present those who have the power to direct the course of history are men of winter, who are afraid of a spring brought by the minjung coming out of their winter hibernation. So they will bring back the winter of military rule and we must be prepared to go back to prison after having been nourished for the continuing struggle during this seemingly warmer period.

My prediction came true with Kwangju. ^(depressing) After that we went through the most severe political winter of recent times until almost all the people nearly froze to death. Even the churches and those who had been active for human rights in the '70s had to keep their mouths shut under threat of imprisonment and even death, until the present regime had consolidated its power, with the blessing of the superpowers.

Even in such a severe cold winter, people could not be kept completely frozen. The first inkling of this was the revival of the resistance movement seen on the university campuses. The government countered this by sending students to prison and to army service, by placing plainclothes agents in classrooms, libraries and wherever students gather. They also put armed police on the campuses, and stationed bus-loads of armed riot police and pepper-fog trucks just outside university gates. They boasted that now they could conquer the university campuses like they had conquered Kwangju. But actually, rather than crush it, that did more to spread the spirit of minjung

to all the university campuses of Korea. Each year student demonstrations became more and more numerous, and the number of imprisoned students became far greater than all those imprisoned during the total rule of Park Chung Hee.

Secondly, the movement in the labor unions became more active than before, even though the government had completely wiped out any legal union movement which was free from government control. Then the government promulgated a new Trade Union Law which was mainly to prevent the involvement of the Protestant URMs and the Roman Catholic Labor Youth movement in the labor movement. The last free labor union, that of Wonpoong Textile Company, was destroyed--violently crushed by police force, together with company-employed gangsters. In the place of the former free union, a new union organization was installed by the order of the company and concerned government agencies.

Strangely, however, all those who experienced the strong hand of the government in the suppression of the union movement, became more conscious than ever of the need for a free trade union movement, and most of them devoted themselves to this cause. All who had been involved were fired and blacklisted. Some of them would get employment in another company, only to be fired from it when their identity became known. Government agencies distributed information about all the workers who had been involved, together with an order not to employ them. Some of these young workers have been fired seven or eight times from as many factories over the past three years. These laborers--expelled union leaders--have themselves now become leaders or organizers in the labor movement, so that actually there are more labor union leaders than before; leaders who have risen up from the grass roots. ↑ not ↓

Following this tendency, churches have also become awakened to take responsibility for speaking up for those who are imprisoned for reasons of conscience, and for laborers who are struggling for their rights. The Christian Human Rights Movement has, since 1982, been slowly reviving its activities. It is brave enough to protest torture and police violence against

students, and to protest the use of military service as an instrument of punishment and of ideological brainwashing.

So now, in spite of the severe repression, manipulation, and control of the mass media, we see churches, young people and laborers stimulated by the Spirit, advocating truth and demanding justice, willing to pay the price of costly discipleship.

VI

Beit
On the other hand, there are certainly a far larger number who have become Christian only because of the anxiety and uncertainty in their lives, and with the hope of an easier life and of heavenly blessings, or perhaps in the hope of success in business, or to gain publicity and fame.

And always the government supports the latter kind of Christianity, and those who devote themselves to making people look on the spiritual side, oblivious to the contradictions in the social and political realities--those who accept the status quo and are inactive in the area of social justice and human rights. Korean Christianity has been applauded and acclaimed by many missionary-sending countries. Because of its great growth in numbers and rapid development, it has been envied by the churches in many Asian countries which have always been numerically weak.

I am not sure whether it is a blessing or a curse that the church is growing so rapidly in numbers and that the church is becoming richer and richer day by day. I think of the Roman Catholic Church before the Reformation in the 16th century. I am also reminded of the eastern churches' power and prosperity at the time of the Communist Revolution in Soviet Russia in 1917. I remember the more recent judgment on the Christian church under the rise of Hitler in Germany, supported by the mainline bourgeois churches. I believe that God has given Korean Christianity a chance to lead in the making of our national history. Whether we will contribute positively or negatively in the

making of this history depends on whether Korean Christians take the course of costly discipleship.

We are called into this costly discipleship. We from the third world are appealing not only to our fellow Christians in our own countries, but also to the Christian sisters and brothers in the first world, to listen to the dialogue between the rich young man and Jesus. The rich young man wanted to have eternal life. Jesus told him to sell what he had and give it to the poor. Jesus is calling you to give up what you have, and share it with the people in the third world. And Jesus said to the rich young man, "And follow me." Follow where? To the suffering of Jesus and the death on the cross. That is to follow Jesus and to die. Jesus was calling for death for the sake of eternal life. Dying to the desire of what you have, selling what you love and giving it to the poor: this is the only hope for the life of the world today.

*That is the way to make oxen go
into ploughshare*

* * *

THE KOREAN MINJUNG'S SEARCH FOR SELF-IDENTITY

by Park Hyung Kyu

We Korean Christians are this year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the coming of Protestantism, and the 200th anniversary of the coming of Roman Catholicism to our country. In this anniversary year when Korea has been chosen as the focus for mission study in North America, I am happy to be with you to speak about the church in Korea for this Conference on World Mission. (Though I am not confident I will be able to fulfill your expectations.)

I will tell you something about some of my own personal experiences and my involvement as a Christian minister in mission. I also want to tell you something about Korea's struggle for self-identity as an independent nation and people, and for liberation from ideological manipulation and political and economic domination from foreign powers.

Actually, I am a product of Christian mission, so perhaps I am qualified to talk about the Christian mission and its future. Perhaps I also qualify as a Korean citizen who has embodied the experience of suffering and hardship imposed upon him: by the unjust Japanese rule, and later under the national agony of our divided country. I have looked at the whole history of the Korean people from two aspects: the self-identity of the Korean people; and liberation from the ideological, political and economic domination of foreign powers. We Koreans like to boast about our long history, but without much scholarly foundation. When I was a child I was taught that our history is of 5,000 years' duration, but actually, our written history goes no further back than 2,000 years. Yet even that 2,000 years is not really our own history, but the history of Korea's domination--militarily and culturally--by various Chinese dynasties, and more recently by the Japanese. Our problem is how to identify ourselves in the midst of cultural and political pressures and military aggressions. Boasting about our 5,000 year-long history is one way of seeking

our identity. We emphasize our nation's origin and our pride in our long history. But identity is still one of our problems, and Christian mission has a role to play. It will either boost or diminish the Korean people's self-identity.

Secondly, we Koreans are born with an aspiration for liberation. As a national community, throughout our long history, we have always aspired to gain liberation from the aggression and domination of the big countries which surround us. As individuals, especially lower class people, we have struggled for a way to be liberated from exploitation, and thus gain human dignity as real human beings. We sometimes call our people a "han"-ridden people. "Han," according to Prof. Suh Nam Dong, "is a deep awareness of the contradictions in a situation and of the unjust treatment meted out to the people or a person by the powerful. And this feeling of 'han' is not just a one-time psychological response to a situation but is an accumulation of such feelings and experiences."

I

Let me explain the meaning of self-identity for Koreans more concretely. The title of this talk might be "The Korean Minjung's Search for Self-Identity."

Let me begin by giving you some experiences from my own childhood and youth, as well as more recent experiences during the '70s.

I was born in 1923, four years after the famous March First Independence Movement. That movement can be described as the final and desperate effort of the Korean people to gain their self-identity as an independent nation and people, and the final cry for liberation. It appealed to the consciences of international organizations, to the morality of nations, and to God, the Creator of the world. However, the cry did not seem to reach God, the appeal did not awaken the consciences of nations, and the movement ended with brutal atrocities by the Japanese military forces toward the Korean people who had staged non-violent demonstrations. The cry of the blood shed by the Japanese military

police was heard everywhere in the whole peninsula--in every town and village. In Che-amni Methodist Church, all the village people were herded into the building, where without discrimination, men, women and children were shot and burned to death. That is one of the symbolic incidents of how the Korean people's aspiration for identity and liberation was crushed by the force of imperialistic, self-interest-bounded international politics, and of the seeming deafness of God. Whenever we think of the seeming failure of the independence movement we think of the cry of Jesus from the cross: "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabbacthani?" ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?")

For several years after the failure of the Independence Movement, the Korean people's desperation and agony became ever deeper, until it almost seemed to become a national mental sickness. Around the time I was born, the sickness of despair of the Korean common people was at its worst. Just before I was born, my mother lost her second son, and her relatives and friends blamed her, insisting it was because she had not properly performed ancestor-worship through the Shaman. So she became more fervent in her worship of all the spirits in order to protect the lives of the remainder of her family. Fortunately, one evening she was visited by a Korean Bible woman, who told her about Jesus Christ and the simple message of Christianity: that God is one who forgives all sins, especially the sin of worshipping false gods, and about God's free grace in accepting people as sons and daughters simply if they believe in him. Immediately she was baptized by an Australian missionary, and then herself became an ardent missionary, telling others the good news, spreading the Christian Gospel of freedom from false religions, and almost forcing our relatives and other village people to convert to Christianity. She healed many mentally-ill people in the name of Jesus, until she was almost thought of as a Jesus-Shaman, exorcising demon-possessed people. For a while she was very successful in converting village people and relatives, and was even able to build a small building for worship. But traditions and family

customs were not easily changed, and finally she was expelled from the family and the village, and had to move into the city in order to be free to attend Christian worship services and give her children a Christian education.

I was born after she became a Christian, and she dedicated me to God as a minister of the church. I was told this as soon as I was old enough to understand. I was sent to a kindergarten run by Australian missionaries, and then to a primary school also run by the same mission. My father, on the other hand, adhered strongly to the Confucian family traditions and morals, even though he allowed my mother to have her way in attending church and educating the children in the Christian tradition. My father himself never wore western clothing in his life. He never spoke any foreign language, including Japanese--although he studied Japanese. Nor did he allow me to wear western clothing to kindergarten or primary school. Sometimes my father took me to various ancestor-worship services against my mother's will. My mother taught me that to bow to ancestors was to break the First and Second Commandments, while my father taught me that ancestor-worship was not a religion, but that it was keeping our traditions: a way to identify and survive as Koreans under Japanese domination. I had difficulty finding my own identity between my father's nationalistic fervor and my mother's strong Christian identity requirements. Should I be a good son to my mother and become a good Christian by refusing ancestor-worship, or should I be dutiful to inherit my father's Confucian tradition and nationalistic heritage?

In the meantime I had to face another crisis. I was in a middle school run by the Japanese, although it was a private school. At that time Japanese militarism, in its attempt to extend imperialistic militarism, forced the conquered people to identify themselves as second-rate Japanese, cooperating with them in their attempt to rule the whole of Asia. I was unable to accept their demand, because of both my father's and my mother's influence, both of which gave strong opposition to accepting this kind of demand. Without

consulting anybody, I decided to refuse to worship the Japanese emperor or to bow at the Japanese Shinto Shrine, even though many of my fellow Korean students gave in to the demands. Very soon I was caught by Japanese police intelligence, expelled from school, and threatened with arrest and death by a military court.

Finally my father and mother persuaded me to accept the reality of Japanese domination and to give in to the Japanese demands, in order to save my life, and to wait for the day of Korea's liberation. After long hesitation, and with a heart-broken cry of agony, I stood before the Japanese military agents and swore loyalty to the Japanese emperor and the Japanese military, promising to cooperate with them in the conquering of Asia. Actually, however, from then on I was suspected by the Japanese as a possible rebel, and an enemy of the Japanese empire.

Forced by the Japanese military to accept and to cooperate in their aim for domination on the outside, within myself I was still torn between nationalism and Christianity. But it was these two ideals together which made me inwardly an enemy of Japanese domination.

II

When the Second World War ended in 1945, bringing liberation from the Japanese, I was about 20 years of age. It is impossible to describe the deep joy, elation and thrill--especially for one who had suffered persecution under the Japanese! It could only be compared to the sudden release of a person who had been under a death sentence, awaiting execution. I almost felt as though I were going crazy in my extreme joy.

The joy of liberation with the news of the Japanese surrender soon dimmed with the realization that we had to face the division of our country--one part under the domination of the communist Soviet Union, and the other under the so-called free world domination of the U.S. So now our identity was torn

From the beginning the Korean people were forced to choose either the communist ideology and social system, or the American so-called free democratic ideology and its capitalist economic system. Again, our identity was formulated not by ourselves, but forced on us by the international political situation and the dominating powers. Most of our Christian young people readily accepted the free democratic and capitalist ideological system without thinking much about it. Christians easily accepted the democratic system; but not only Christians. Most of those who happened to be in the south regarded it as their fate to accept the system given to them, in order to survive. In the south, only those who had a strong ideological affinity to communism could object to or oppose the imposed system and ideology. This minority was gradually eliminated by political persecution which forced them to leave and go to the north. During and after the Korean War, any remaining elements with socialist leanings were completely eliminated.

In north Korea, I am sure the same kind of extreme identification problem could have existed. Most Christians evacuated to the south, while those who remained were regarded by the communists as being identified with American ideology and the capitalist system, and as such were severely persecuted, or else they were brainwashed and made instruments of communist propaganda.

We don't have much information about the situation in north Korea, and of course, we don't believe everything our government publishes or dramatizes about north Korea. Nor do we believe all that is reported about the ugly politics or the people's miserable life by defectors from north Korea. One thing which makes us very sad, however, is that there seems to be no trace of any Christian congregation openly active in church life. That is, in north Korea, it seems there is no possibility of having a Christian identity. North Korean identity, no less than ours in the south, is not self-chosen, but rather is a forced, or a brain-washed identity. And that ideology only tells people to identify themselves with the communist ideology and the Kim Il Sung government.

It does not allow anyone or any group to search for or build up its own identity by historical personal experience. This is a pity, and it is deeply regrettable that the people's "han" may have accumulated even more under the extreme totalitarian rule in north Korea, which seems to be more oppressive than any other communist regime. With such an identity problem, north Korean people's "hân" may be even more acute than south Koreans'.

However, in south Korea there is also a problem. Of course we are always at liberty to identify with the American free democratic system, and the capitalist system, and the Christian religion. Or at least that is true so long as it is of the conservative, evangelical, pietistic or mystical variety. Not only Christianity, but any religion which gives people aspirations for earthly blessing and heavenly reward, makes them satisfied to accept the present reality without complaints, and keeps them obedient to whatever ruler is in power, is welcomed by the powers-that-be. Anyone is acceptable to the Korean government who advocates the teaching of Romans 13:4, which says, "Everyone must obey state authorities, because no authority exists without God's permission, and the existing authorities have been put there by God."

Anyone--Christian or non-Christian--who raises questions about the regime, about the legitimacy of the power, the injustice of dominant groups, or exploitation of the laborers by big business or transnational corporations may be faced with an identity crisis. Persons who criticize the existing power will be forced to confess that their identity is with the socialist or communist ideology. They will be branded communist sympathizers, and be forced to identify with the north Korean communist regime.

III

At the end of last year, two professors and a Christian minister were investigated by the so-called Anti-Communist Bureau of the Korean National Police because they had analyzed the teaching materials in primary, middle and high

going into detail, through that investigation, the police forced them to write confessions that made them--intentionally or unintentionally--identify themselves with north Korean propaganda; and under threats, they were forced to write a statement of repentance. They were forced to give up their identity and to accept the identity given them by their interrogators.

Just previous to this case, in 1983, the same bureau of investigation arrested some 600 college students who were engaged in night school programs for young laborers. After one or two weeks' investigation, sometimes with torture and threats, all of these students were forced to make the "confession" that they were communist sympathizers, and to submit a statement swearing that they would never engage in night school programs or such activities again. Furthermore, they were forced to name persons--professors and others--and books they had read, whose influence had made them become socialist-minded; and to state that now they understood how bad socialism was, recognizing that it identified them with north Korea. They had to affirm that they would give up their socialist ideology and be loyal to the free democratic system, and that they would work loyally for the national interest--in other words, that they would support the present political regime.

Let me return to another incident I experienced personally. It was in 1976, my fourth arrest. I, and about 20 of my colleagues in Urban Mission, were arrested by the City Police Anti-Communist Bureau, and investigated as to whether we were communist "fifth columnists" who had infiltrated into the church organization with money contributed by north Korea to Moscow, and which came to us through the World Council of Churches. The man who was responsible for this investigation was assistant chief of the Seoul City Police Department, and was also, incidentally, an elder in good standing of the Presbyterian Church. They examined lectures I had given at the Seminary, my sermons, and my articles which had appeared in periodicals, but they could find no grounds for my conviction. Finally the investigation chief came to me

to negotiate, and was really intimidating. That was a very critical moment for me, threatening the loss of my self-identity as a minister of the Christian church. The agent told me, "This Anti-Communist Bureau not only catches communists, but in cases of necessity, we also sometimes produce communists. We can color people pink or red at will. We have decided to make you only pink, so why don't you make the confession we are asking you to?" He showed me all kinds of instruments of torture, and told me that unless I confessed as they commanded me to, that is, that I was a fifth columnist, and that money had come for us from north Korea through the WCC, I would go through all this torture. "You may not die immediately," he told me, "You may only die in a year or so." Then he left, giving me about ten minutes to decide.

I was already completely exhausted. I had been interrogated ceaselessly for about 20 days without sleep. I lay down on the army cot in the cell, and praying, fell into a deep sleep. I was awakened by army boots kicking the bed. The chief offered me a cup of coffee and asked me my decision. I said my answer was "No." Then he kicked me and struck me several times and left the room. I cannot explain it, but I was at peace, and my heart was full of joy. I felt strongly that this was not me, but that the Holy Spirit was in me. I came to realize that the Holy Spirit is always with me, and helps me not to lose my identity--as a Korean, as a minister, or as a Christian, who is commanded to love others as myself. At that moment my hatred of those investigators was transformed and I became sympathetic to them, though I would not give in to their demand. I remembered how I had given in to the Japanese in my boyhood.

I learned later that at about that time a young man whom I barely knew, who was being investigated at a police station, escaped and went to a missionary to make it known that the police were hatching a plot to make me out to be a communist. The young man had become a Christian through one of the community organizers working under me. He explained to the missionary that he was being

ordered to write a statement about my alleged communist leanings, and fearing he might be forced by torture to give in, he wrote a declaration of conscience. After leaving this declaration with the missionary, he turned himself back in to the police. Perhaps it was thanks to that man's timely action that I was released without further torture. In any event, no more effort was made to convict me of being a communist. Truly, God works in amazing ways.

IV

We Koreans in this historical moment are facing the same problem of identity faced by our ancients. Before the United Silla Dynasty came into being, there were three kingdoms on the Korean peninsula: Silla, Paekche and Koguryo. The three kingdoms competed for leadership. Silla accomplished that aspiration for a united country, but only through support by foreign forces from China. From that moment on, Silla's self-identity was questioned by many of the common people. Strangely, the ruling classes always seem more willing to identify with a big foreign power than with the common people of their own country. Thus there was a strategic marriage between the Silla rulers and the dominating foreign power, while the common people were regarded as enemies by the ruling aristocracy. This kind of conflict between the ruling powers' tendency to accept big foreign powers, and the common people's rejection of what is foreign, is connected to the repressive rule of the aristocratic cult.

In the whole history of the Korean people, the government has almost always been weak and inadequate in its defense of the country and people. But when the government and army were destroyed by foreign powers, then the people themselves have risen to the defense of their families and their country and their lives. The most notable instance of this kind of struggle for self-identity was during the invasion of the Japanese under Hideyoshi, in the (1590s). Of course, we honor Admiral Yi Sun Shin as the hero who saved the nation, but history proved that the real fight to expel the Japanese armies was a volunteer

grass-roots army which defeated the Japanese armies everywhere by use of guerrilla tactics. I would like to quote or summarize a few paragraphs from the description of the failure of the Japanese invasion, written by the famous Japanese historian, George Sansom.

"As contingents arrived in Pusan they received orders from Hideyoshi for each division to take a particular portion of the country.

"The Japanese army commanders in each province set about imposing upon the Korean inhabitants a new system of civil government akin to the feudal organizations of Japan. They began a land survey and a redistribution of territories. Efforts were made to teach the Japanese language and Japanese customs to the inhabitants, and in general by good treatment and conciliatory propaganda, to persuade them to consider themselves as part of Japan, an idea which was to be revived some centuries later when the military party in Japan conceived the notion of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

"The King of Korea, with his princes and ministers, had fled before the Japanese commanders, leaving the city to be looted by its long-suffering citizens before the invaders arrived. The Korean general entrusted with the defense of Seoul made a feeble pretence of holding the line, but he rapidly withdrew, and the king moved farther north to the city of Pyongyang.

"Meanwhile, the panic which had overtaken the Korean soliders as the Japanese pushed forward had subsided, and in some areas was replaced by an aggressive spirit. Some of the best Japanese troops took a beating from Korean levies. The people showed courage and endurance; the government was weak and foolish.

"The King fled north to the Yalu River and from there he sent messengers to China begging for assistance... Fortune had not so far favoured the Korean army, but the passage of Japanese armies had encouraged the growth of a resistance movement which by now was gathering momentum. The regular forces

were led by miserable officers and were almost useless, but the farmers showed a strong fighting spirit in defence of their fields and their crops. In most provinces they began to harass the Japanese forces by determined guerrilla tactics, cutting off small detachments and keeping the main bodies on the alert by their rapid movements. In open country almost everywhere the Japanese were now on the defensive, and on one occasion at least they failed in an attack upon a Korean fort defenced by local levies, although they outnumbered the garrison.

"...The King of Korea had sent repeated appeals for help to the Chinese government and at last a Chinese force was sent to drive the Japanese back from Pyongyang. It was trapped and cut to pieces by the Japanese defenders..."

There is a tendency for the ruling classes to be easily enticed into identifying with a foreign power. We have just read of an example in which the government did not trust the common people, but rather trusted China. But while the Chinese troops were defeated by the Japanese army, the common people saved Korea from defeat. This pattern continues to be repeated. The ruling powers trust outside foreign powers--China, Japan, America, or, in the case of the north, Russia.

V

The Christian mission also faces this same sort of problem. Should the church identify with the American way of life? Missionary mentality is inclined to get the people to identify with the powerful side, and this is one tendency of Korean Christians. In words, they talk about identifying with the weak and powerless, but in practice, in action, they identify with the powerful foreign churches, such as that in the United States. The government uses this as an instrument for manipulation, to pacify the people, or tame them, and make them obedient.

There is another side of the Christian mission, however, which has always

sided with the common people who are striving for self-identity as a nation, and as a proud people. It is fortunate that the Protestant churches came into Korea while the people were in a national identity crisis under the oppression of a foreign power. Fortunately, the Christian missionaries identified with the grass-roots people who were struggling for their national identity. The great advance of Christianity in Korea has its roots in the missionaries' original genius in the decision that the Gospel should identify not with the upper, ruling classes, but with the lower, suffering classes. I doubt whether the general trend of Christianity today is following this direction--except in the case of those churches or leaders who are engaged in Urban Rural Mission, the Ecumenical or the Human Rights movements, in spite of the fact that this may mean harassment by government agencies, as well as accusation from church people that they are meddling in political affairs.

God shows his concern for people or nations by calling them by name, giving them a particular identity. In Acts 17:26-27, Paul tells us, "From the one man (God) created all races of men, and made them live over the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and limits of the places where they would live. He did this so that they would look for him, and perhaps find him as they felt around for him. Yet God is actually not far from any one of us."

When the Hebrew people were in Egypt in Old Testament times, they were in danger of losing their identity, severely oppressed and exploited by the Egyptians. The story of Exodus may be told as a story of the Hebrew people's rediscovery of their self-identity. The whole theme of the Old Testament may be described as stories of the Hebrew people losing and discovering their self-identity, in relation to their God, Yahweh.

In the story of Jesus, also, by his mission we can understand how God, through Jesus, calls the people back to their own particular identity.

liberated from the imposed identity of outcasts, prostitutes or sinners. Those names are an identity imposed by society, which is ruled by unjust, hypocritical religious institutions. Jesus came to restore them and to give them a new identity through relation with himself and God. To call God "Father" means that their identity and worth as human persons cannot be imposed by any social system or status, but is given by God himself. That was Jesus' movement for the Kingdom of God as I understand it.

Christian mission from that time to this, and to the end of the world, should be the same: that by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who was crucified and resurrected for all mankind, we must preach the message that a human being's particular identity will be restored through liberation from the false identity which has been imposed from outside. All those powers which impose false identities are enemies of God, and encourage the worship of false gods--in other words, idol worship.

Korean Christianity is now, after 100 years of mission, facing the problem as to whether it should identify with the American way of life, or whether it should find a truly Korean alternative. The only way to find the direction for Christian mission of the future, is to learn how to identify Christian mission with the minjung. The minjung's liberation and aspirations are real concerns of God.

Let me close with a final story. When I was in prison for the second time, in 1974, along with many students and some professors, fortunately, for a short time, I was together with ordinary prisoners--robbers, murderers, embezzlers. In the early morning and evening we had a time of reading the Bible together, and telling our own personal stories to each other. Everyone would confess his own mistakes. I also had to tell them about my mistakes and sins. They were all surprised and laughed at me, but they accepted me because finally they realized I was really one of them. They had treated me as an honored political prisoner, but they liked me better now that I had

identified myself with them, and openly confessed that I was a person with many shortcomings, and because I stayed with them without complaining. They became more interested in the stories of the Bible, and they came to regard many of the Bible stories as written for themselves. At Christmas, I baptized several of them. In nearly 30 years of ministry I have never had such a real feeling of church community as I felt in that prison cell. I sometimes say the best way for a pastor to evangelize would be for him to go to prison as an ordinary criminal and to be among other criminals as long as possible, and thus to learn to identify with sinners. I feel that was what Jesus did, and he called us to follow him.

CALLED TO BE PILGRIMS:

TOWARD AN ASIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGY *
FROM THE KOREAN IMMIGRANT PERSPECTIVE

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By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . .

. . . having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:8-10,13-16.)

We are a pilgrim people. Like Abraham we have been called by God to live in a wilderness "as in a foreign land," as "strangers and exiles," not feeling wholly at home where we are, nor being comfortable any more about returning to where we or our parents came from. We are not wandering, aimless nomads, however. We are a pilgrim people who are on a sacred journey. We have been freed from the hold of one culture or one society; we have been called "to go

*This is a revision of an essay published in Byongsuh Kim and Sang Hyun Lee, Editors, The Korean Immigrant in America (Montclair, NJ: Association of Korean Christian Scholars, 1980).

out" with visions for "a better country" which would be a true homeland not only for ourselves but for all humankind.

We (or our parents or grandparents) came here, of course, for various personal and very human reasons--for better education, for financial well-being, for greater career opportunities and the like. But we now find that we do not wholly control our circumstances by ourselves. We find ourselves in a wilderness, living as aliens and strangers. And the inescapable question arises from the depth of our being: What is the real meaning of our immigrant existence in America? What is the spiritual meaning of our alien status?

The biblical faith presents us here, I believe, with a clear vision--the vision of having been called by God to live as pilgrims, as his special servants. Having left behind us the security of belonging to just one world, we are now free enough to dream bigger dreams and to see larger visions than we might have otherwise. In other words, our alien predicament is something we can turn into a sacred vocation--that is, into a vocation of the pioneers who introduce creative advances and imaginative changes into human society in order to do God's will here on this earth. Such servants of God lead the often uncomfortable life of sojourners, pilgrims. But their life is one of hope and faith because their purpose and their visions have an unshakable foundation, even God himself.

This is the central biblical vision, I believe, that we must by God's grace bring ourselves to see and to appropriate. What follows is a modest beginning in fulfilling the task of elaborating upon the content of this vision. Let it be clear at the outset that the specific context from which I write is the Korean immigrant community--especially the first generation. For this reason, I do not and cannot pretend to speak for the experiences of all Asian-American communities. However, there is, I believe, sufficient commonality between my own context and the contexts of other Asian-Americans so that

the following theological reflections may properly be thought of as at least one possible approach to an Asian-American theology.

A. Doing a Theology in Asian-American Context

1. The Wilderness of Marginality

This search for the meaning of our immigrant existence in America began as an urgent personal quest. And this quest emerged out of my awareness of the American wilderness into which I have been thrown. Ever since I came to this country as a seventeen-year-old youngster way back in the 1950's, I have had this vague but persistent feeling that something was fundamentally problematic with my existence here. Day in and day out, it is drummed into our awareness that we, Asian immigrants, are aliens, tolerated yet unwelcome guests. After twenty and some years in this country, I am still asked when I am returning to Korea. Almost every glance and gesture of many white Americans says to me, What are you doing here? Why aren't you in your own country? To be sure, there are redeeming moments of human communion that cut across racial, national and other lines of distinction. To live in this country is also to enjoy the exhilarating sense of the largeness of possibilities and opportunities. However, these redeeming moments of friendship are hopelessly outnumbered by experiences of disdain and distrust, and the sense of opportunities basically circumscribed by a forced awareness of our alien status. The overall ethos of American society is still deeply alienating to all non-white persons.

My tacit awareness of all this received a painful but helpful clarification within the past several years. I learned that scholars in the field of minority studies had a theory and a name for my predicament, for the wilderness in which I was finding myself. A "marginal man," they called a person like myself. In a nutshell, a marginal person is one who is "in between" two

cultures or societies without wholly belonging to either one. "He is poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of which is often 'dominant' over the other," wrote Everett Stonequist.¹ A marginal person, furthermore, is often rejected by the dominant group. "He emulates and strives to be accepted by a group of which he is not yet, or is only peripherally, a member."² In other words, he identifies with, or has internalized, the norms and ideals of the dominant group but is rejected by that group. So, in this sense, a marginal man is not only "in between" or "on the boundary" but also "outside," or at the periphery of, the main group of a given society. One rule that is often emphasized by the proponents of the marginality theory is that the more a minority person identifies himself with the main group, the more he would feel marginalized.³ He will feel more "in between" and also more rejected. The highly educated and the second and later generations, then, are potentially the most typically marginal persons.

Marginality in the sense of being "on the boundary" or "in between" (bi- or multi-cultural) is wilderness enough for anybody. But the element in marginality that clearly has the potentiality for being a de-humanizing power is the rejection by the main group. And this element is especially pernicious to the non-white minority persons in the United States. One Korean-American sociologist has written:

Non-white immigrants may attain a high degree of cultural assimilation (adoption of American life-style), but structural assimilation (equal life-chances) is virtually impossible unless the immutable independent Variable, "race," becomes mutable through miscegenation or cognitive mutation of the WASP. Koreans are no exception to this Lebensschicksal.⁴

A white European immigrant, in other words, would readily be accepted as "one of us" by the host society even if he hardly knows one word of English or a single fact about American history. But a non-white immigrant is automatically and almost permanently an outsider even if he is highly acculturated in the American way of life. With him, race sticks. Many in fact reach the shores of this land already quite westernized, some even with such names as John, Mary, and Samuel, and many of them with a deep sense of attachment to many of America's values and ideals. Something more painful than disappointment, then, is felt when they discover that the world which is already a part of them does not find them fit for a full membership in it.

In this way, the problematic nature of the American wilderness for non-white persons begins to emerge into a clear view. The judgment expressed in the above quotation perhaps is too severe. But there is enough truth in it to make what it says a question of human and existential significance. One needs to belong. One needs to be able to place himself or herself, and be placed by others, in a way that is respected by the society in which he or she lives. To be human, one also needs to participate in the ongoing process of history, in the molding of the future. Will Asian immigrants ever be able to feel this sense of belonging in this country? If not, are they forfeiting their full humanity by staying here? Are they raising their children in a land where those children will never know the simple but fundamental joys of being just "one of us"?

Here we see the question that every non-white immigrant must face in the wilderness of marginality, and how he responds to it would be of existential significance to him and to every aspect of his life. Most of the time the tendency, we are told, is to escape, elude, and avoid. And ultra-nationalism and its opposite, excessive assimilation, are the chief means of escapism.⁵ One

tries unrealistically to return to his homeland while he is physically still here. That is, he tries to live only as an Asian, while the realities are that he is "on the boundary," both Asian and American. Or he tries, again unrealistically, to live only as an American, rejecting his ethnic roots which in the eyes of the white society are not respectable. Extreme nationalism, of course, is the more usual mode of escapism for the first generation to whom the memories of homeland are strong and vivid.

Surveys and even simple observation will show that the cold winds of the American wilderness are beginning to have their debilitating effects upon the lives of Asian immigrants. According to one study, eighty percent of Korean youth in the Chicago area indicated that they have felt racial discrimination.⁶ Marginality theory would analyze this high degree of marginality-consciousness in youth as being due to the high degree of their identification with the American world of ideals and values and their subsequent rejection by the members of that world. Somewhat oblivious to what is happening to their children, many first-generation Koreans are avoiding the wilderness of marginality by limiting their lives to the cozy, separatist ethnic enclaves. Many, certainly not all, Korean churches show the signs of being more "conservative" and "traditional" than their counterparts in Seoul, Taegu, or elsewhere back home. They are, in other words, refusing to truly emigrate into America, in order to avoid the negative aspects of the life in wilderness. No wonder, then, that many Koreans indicate in a recent survey that they would return to Korea when they reach old age!⁷ Even if it meant abandoning their children in this wilderness, they would still live out their lives in their native land where they will be able to enjoy the remaining years, die, and then be buried in a world where the dignity of their humanity is acknowledged. No one should,

of course, expect them or any other group of people in a similar predicament to feel differently! But is this desirable? Further, would they really feel so "at home" when they return to Korea after having been in America for many years? Can they ultimately avoid their marginality?

So, we are back to the wilderness of the American society. Marginality is a fact that cannot be avoided. And the question of how to live in it must be faced up to with all the seriousness we can muster. Now one thing we must understand as we deal with this question is that it is not simply a social, psychological or philosophical issue, but also a religious and theological one. This is so at least to those of us who embrace the assumption that human beings are essentially "religious" and cannot but ask the questions of ultimate nature. History of humankind teaches us that we are all having to face what Paul Tillich called "ontological anxiety" before the basic uncertainties of human existence, and that human beings have the inevitable predilection to succumb to the temptation to avoid or elude this anxiety. Our problems, then, run deep. The problem of how to live an honest, authentic life in the face of marginality without escaping is in the final analysis a religious issue. Where, and how, can we attain the grace and faith which can give us that essential existential courage with which we can honestly face up to our marginal existence?

The same point can be formulated in terms of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. What is God attempting to do in and through our situation? How would he have us live as Christian Asian immigrants in the wilderness of marginality? What is our duty and responsibility as followers of Christ here in America?

To raise these questions in a marginalized situation means, according to all that we have said so far, the necessity to deal with the following key elements and questions of our marginality:

(a) The true meaning of marginality: What is the theological significance of our marginality in both of its two dimensions? Is there God's purpose in our marginality?

(b) Ethnicity: Ethnicity is the basis upon which many marginal persons in the American wilderness are dehumanized. What is our ethnicity? Is there God's purpose in our ethnicity?

(c) Immigration: To immigrate into America involves marginalization. Should one still immigrate? Is there God's purpose in immigration?

2. Why an Asian-American Theology?

One question that is in the minds of many, though not always verbalized, is: Why do we need an Asian-American theology? Would it not be sufficient simply to apply the existing Christian theologies, say Barth's or Tillich's system, to our situation?

One of the answers was already implicitly present in the above analysis of our situation of marginality. The theology that is Christian and that is relevant for us Asian immigrants in America must be a theology of marginality because the gospel of Jesus Christ can be effectively communicated and preached to a people only if it is articulated in a way meaningful to their particular situation. What we mean here is basically what Paul Tillich called the "method of correlation." Tillich wrote that theology "tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message."⁸ Of course, the message of the gospel must not be substantively changed or "watered down" to suit the situation; in fact, the true nature of the human situation cannot be understood apart from the help of the redeeming gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is true that the message cannot be communicated unless the nature of the hearers' situation is taken into account.

Now, the particular sort of marginality encountered by Asian immigrants in American society seems to affect so many aspects and dimensions of their personal and social life that it effectively describes their human situation. And, if so, a Christian theology relevant to our situation must be a theology which addresses the question of marginality.

There is yet another rationale for an Asian-American theology. It is the fact that our focus upon human migration and the accompanying marginalization or uprootedness leads us to the very heart of the biblical faith itself. Walter Brueggemann has recently demonstrated that the entire Bible can be viewed as the history of how God called Israelites out of their land into land-lessness or home-lessness and then back to a land. "Israel's faith is essentially a journeying in and out of a land, and its faith can be organized around these focuses," argues Brueggemann.⁹ When Israelites became complacent and idolatrous, God called them into wilderness, into exiles. And then he also brought them to a home with the hope that this time they would live with their ultimate trust placed only in God. "The central learning about the land motif which has come out of this study is that grasping for home leads to homelessness and risking homelessness yields the gift of home."¹⁰ Home-lessness and home, taken in their literal and symbolic senses, are the central dimensions of human existence which the biblical faith addresses.

It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that as we focus upon our own bicultural home-lessness in this American wilderness, we are locating ourselves in such a way that we may truly hear the good news of the biblical faith.

3. Marginality, Pilgrimage and Theologies of Liberation

A brief word is in order at this point to indicate how we are understanding the place of our own theological task within the larger framework of contemporary

theology--particularly, in relation to various theologies of liberation. To the extent that the Asian-American predicament includes an element of dehumanization, we must learn from those liberation theologies which have been emerging out of various minority contexts. The following are some of the basic insights of liberation theologies which can only be helpful to us:

- (a) that Jesus' solidarity with the poor and the outcasts is not a peripheral but an essential aspect of the gospel itself;
- (b) that salvation means Shalom, i.e., being made whole in all dimensions of one's life (in social as well as individual relationships) already here on this earth, in a real anticipation of its complete actualization in the future;
- (c) that all theologies, including the Euro-American, emerge from concrete contexts, with the implication that no theology (even Barth or Tillich) is or should be the universal theology; and
- (d) that a concrete analysis of one's own context is a necessary theological task both for the purpose of providing a language which can meaningfully and faithfully convey the message of the gospel today and for the purpose of finding an effective means of Christian practice.¹¹

We must, however, point out an important way in which our approach has to be different from most examples of liberation theology. The latter is usually built around the oppression-liberation motif. The human predicament of the minority and third world peoples is analyzed as oppression, dehumanization, or domination, and their redemption is conceived as liberation. This analysis is appropriate even in our Asian-American situation, as indicated above, to the extent that marginality in the second sense refers to the rejection by the dominant group. Our situation includes, however, another dimension. I refer

to the marginality in the first sense: namely, the wilderness of bicultural existence, or the boundary situation of having left the security of one's home and now belonging to two cultural worlds. To ignore this dimension would be to lose contextual integrity in our theological reflection. To do so would indeed mean violating one of the cardinal principles of liberation theology itself, namely, the emphasis upon doing theology out of one's own context. Our own Asian-American context, therefore, must not become invisible under the analysis borrowed from some other minority context. We must not simply accept what others have said out of their own predicaments.

If the oppression-liberation motif is not completely adequate for our situation, what then shall be our hermeneutical principle? My proposal is that we try the marginality-pilgrimage rubric. As already indicated, marginality is a complex enough concept so that it points to both our bicultural existence as well as our dehumanization. My suggestion is that the biblical notion of pilgrimage may be the concept with which we can most appropriately discern the theological meaning of our marginal existence, in both senses of its meaning.

Who is a pilgrim? Here we offer a working definition: A pilgrim is one who (1) lives with an ultimate loyalty to, and confidence in, the reign of God alone, (2) is willing both to leave the security of one's own home and also to sojourn even in a strange land if necessary, and (3) resists the temptation to idolize either leave-taking or sojourning, either homelessness or home. The pilgrim lives "lightly" with only a tent over his head, always willing to embrace the dialectic of leaving and staying, of home-lessness and at-homeness, out of an unflinching trust in God alone.¹²

Our proposal is to reinterpret our Asian-American existence (which I have called "the wilderness of marginality") with the help of the understanding of

Christian existence as pilgrimage. Our marginality in the first sense (the bicultural existence) will be seen as possessing the creative potentiality of functioning as a spiritual wilderness which all pilgrims who leave the security of home in pursuit of the promise of God must be willing to enter. Our marginality in the second sense (dehumanization) will have to be seen as a situation that calls for an ethic of re-humanization--that is, a praxis for justice and reconciliation as an essential dimension of the sacred pilgrimage to which we have been called. It should be noted here that this present essay will not yet fully develop such an ethic but rather concentrate upon working out a rough sketch of what the overall picture of an Asian-American theological perspective with pilgrimage as the key hermeneutic motif would look like. The delineation of a more concrete ethic will remain as an important agenda for further work.

Two brief further remarks are necessary in regard to our starting assumptions which in some respects distinguish our perspective from most theologies of liberation. The first has to do with the potential applicability of the marginality-pilgrimage perspective to various human contexts other than the Asian-American. The dichotomy of the oppressors vs. the oppressed, which is a basic ingredient of most liberation theologies, drives a wedge between two groups of human beings. However marginality, at least in its first meaning, is an experience that cuts across racial, economic, and sexual lines. With this potentially universal note in the concept of marginality (and, thus, in the concept of pilgrimage), could our Asian-American theology strive to speak to at least some aspects of the condition of all human beings without completely losing our contextual concreteness? Tentative observations will be made in this regard at the end of this essay.

The other point to note here is our admittedly theocentric emphasis with the concomitant stress upon the sovereignty of God. We have spoken about pilgrimage as a vocation to which God has called us and is calling us. The usual

tendency of many proponents of liberation theology and of the related school, theology of hope, has been to portray God as the power of the future. But we start from the presupposition that the God who is not the God of the past and also of the present cannot be the God of the future.¹³ We believe that the questions, Why has God brought us into this American wilderness of marginality, and, What is his will for my present existence in this wilderness? are as important as the question, To what kind of future is God leading us? Further, the ultimate reference point for all Christian reflection and praxis can only be the end which God himself has in mind for human history--an end which is never reducible to this or that human conception or embodiment. The meaning of the openness in our bicultural wilderness, we believe, can best be understood in terms of the image of a Christian pilgrim, for whom Christian existence is essentially a never-ending process of being transformed into a life more consonant with God's will. We must of course never forget the critique which liberation theology has so effectively brought against traditional theology--namely, the charge that a God-centered theology can, though it does not have to, turn into an eternalistic, other-world-oriented worldview which breeds quietism.¹⁴ At the same time, however, we cannot do with a deity who is in any way less than the absolute and sovereign Lord of all human life and all human history.

B. The Faith of Pilgrims

Like Abraham, then, we too are in the wilderness. And our wilderness is called marginality. How shall we live, what shall we do, in this wilderness? To ask this is to raise the question, What does it mean for us to have faith, in our marginal situation? We shall now outline at least some aspects of an answer to this question, utilizing pilgrimage as our interpretive principle. In other words, we will try to reinterpret the meaning of our marginal existence with

the faith of pilgrims as our model. Three basic points will be made: (1) Faith for us means the confidence that in being marginalized we have been called to walk into and through a wilderness in order to learn the way of Christian pilgrimage; (2) faith also means a loyalty to and confidence in the God who was graciously present even in our Asian past--a past to which we are now called to make a sacred pilgrimage; and (3) faith for us also means a trusting willingness to become immigrants into all of God's world--including the American society.

1. Marginal Existence as a Sacred Calling

A pilgrim is willing to leave the security of his home and to enter the wilderness of homelessness in order to be open to the higher horizon of the purposes of God. Viewed in the light of this understanding of Christian existence, the religious meaning of our marginality (in the sense of bicultural existence) can only be this: that we are called to embrace our marginal existence as the path of spiritual pilgrimage. The life in a wilderness seems to be a training ground for all those who are called to be God's special servants. Abraham went out from his home looking for "a better country," but God first led him to a life of wandering. The children of Israel did not move directly from their slavery in Egypt to the promised land but were first brought into a wilderness. Jesus himself began his own ministry by first entering a wilderness where he both lived through testings and trials and also experienced the nearness of God the Father.

This is not to say that all Asian immigrants are automatically pilgrims. Wilderness is a lonely place where one is constantly tempted to feel hopeless, to lose trust, and to build idols. As we noted already, Asian immigrants are tempted to avoid or elude their wilderness of marginality through ethnocentric nationalism, mindless absorption into the American way of life, or other means. The human predilection for a life of security and ease overrides our better

instincts and tempts us to shrug off our responsibility to follow the vocation of pilgrimage.

The essentiality of appropriating the wilderness as our own can be plainly seen in the creative potentiality inherent in the nature of marginality. To go out from one's homeland and live on the cultural and social boundary line means to be freed from the dominance of one culture or one society. As the bearers of the image of God, human beings were never meant to live totally enslaved by the confines of certain finite principles, e.g., one's nationality, cultural heritage, etc. Human beings can live only within their concrete contexts, but they are also able to transcend the natural givens, to dream higher dreams and see greater visions. Marginality, therefore, is like the night or desert where all of our little and petty concerns recede into the background and give way to our more ultimate concerns and more significant aspirations. This is why whenever God calls certain men and women to work as his creative coworkers, he takes them out of their life of security and thrusts them into the wide-open space of wilderness. He wants his servants to be "in the world but not of the world." This is why when Jesus called his disciples, they were asked to leave everything behind and follow him.

The creative potentiality of marginality has been pointed out by some recent social scientists. Arnold Toynbee, the renowned historian, has argued that marginal persons, having been thrown into the land of uncertainties, have to ask themselves who they are and what their life's meaning might be, and that as a result of such self-searching, they can emerge as persons of creative visions and energies. It has been pointed out that it is this sort of marginal persons who can advance human civilizations and cultures. Anthropologist Victor Turner calls marginality a "liminal situation," and points to its peculiar capacity to generate a genuine communion among human beings. Turner writes:

Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy," possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency. ¹⁶

Turner then draws a further conclusion, as follows:

Prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people, "edgemen," who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the clichés associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men in fact or imagination. In their productions we may catch glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized and fixed in structure. ¹⁷

It is interesting to note that many feminist writers speak about the inevitability of an "experience of nothingness" for those women who reject the roles and values that have been defined for them by the male-oriented society.

Carol Christ writes:

In allowing herself to experience the nothingness in a life lived by meeting others' expectations, a woman gives up her reliance on conventional stories or roles that had once provided meaning in her life. Because she can no longer accept conventional answers to her questions, she opens herself to the radically new--possibly to the revelation of powers or forces of being larger than herself that can ground her in a new understanding of herself and her position in the world. ¹⁸

So, the "experience of nothingness" for women is "a period of purgation," and does not have to be "paralyzing--it is liberating." ¹⁹ Only by living through this spiritual wilderness, argues Christ, can women achieve an authentic sense of self and an authentic and new orientation in the world.

What does all this mean for us, the Asian-American Christians? Does it not point to the possibility that our journey through the wilderness of bicultural marginality can help us achieve a clearer understanding of ourselves and of our place in the world as disciples of Christ? Does it not mean that we have been called to live as pilgrims in search of a more creative and authentic self-understanding and a more faithful Christian service?

We should hasten to point out that to face up to our marginality in this way is to acknowledge our powerlessness when measured against those who are at the center of the American culture and society. We do not, of course, boast of our powerlessness; there is nothing in that circumstance itself which we would care to be proud about. Marginal powerlessness in itself is no virtue.²⁰ But, as we have seen, it is precisely through the experience of marginal powerlessness that human beings may achieve a greater self-awareness and creativity. Perhaps it is for this reason that God often seems to choose those who are socially and politically powerless to serve as his special servants. When the boastful accomplishments of human powers and capacities shine and demand attention, the redeeming power of God remains hidden and unacknowledged. God chooses powerless persons. Those who would become instruments of God's will must necessarily undergo a kind of self-emptying and become "earthen vessels" so as to show that "the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (II Cor. 4:7). Most of the biblical figures who played some pivotal role in the divine history of redemption were marginal and powerless persons. Consider Abraham, Moses, the major and minor prophets, John the Baptist, Mary, Saint Paul, and even Jesus himself. All of them, as well as so many others in the Bible, were marginal people in their society, not wholly belonging to the power structure of the world in which they lived. But precisely their marginality or powerlessness was their strength. They were free enough to live for the purposes of God rather than for the values of a given society and culture. They were free enough to live as pilgrims in search of the kingdom of God.

So, we shall be what we are, Asian and American, and we shall celebrate what we are, not primarily because of any inherent value in us but rather because of our intrinsic purposiveness within God's scheme of things. In other words,

the good news for Asian-Americans is that in being culturally marginalized and socially powerless, we have an opportunity to become pilgrims. We can synthesize what is good in the Asian and what is good in the American and forge something that is new.²¹ And, as a people different from the dominant group in American society, we can work as creative agents of change who help make this society "a better country."

Some of my fellow Asian-Americans ask, How can anyone be both Asian and American? Would not such a two-sided existence on the boundary be confusing and thus debilitating? All that we have said so far has prepared us for a clear answer to this question. Our ultimate identity lies neither in our being Asian nor in our being American; it lies rather in our having been called by God the Father of Jesus Christ to live a life of pilgrimage and discipleship. Ultimately, we are the children of God. If this religious dimension of our identity is clearly established in our hearts and minds, then our existence on the cultural boundary does not have to dishearten us. Such an existence will remain sometimes confusing and even lonely. But such is our wilderness, and, for pilgrims, a wilderness can be a liberating and broadening experience.

2. Pilgrimage to Our Asian Roots

Thus, we are in the wilderness of marginality, called to go out on a journey of pilgrimage. What shall we do? Where shall we go? Ultimately, of course, our destination is the "city of God," and our task one of building a more humane and just society wherever we go. However, we cannot go on this journey as abstract human beings; we have to be concrete persons. And persons live caught up in time-- that is, in a past, a present and a future. We must know where we are coming from and where we are going. Without knowing the meaning of our past and the shape of our future, we cannot participate in the making of history. Our pilgrimage,

therefore, must take the form of a pilgrimage back to our Asian past and also the form of a pilgrimage forward to our American future. Let us take a closer look at each of these journeys we must undertake.

All persons must take their own journeys back to their ethnic roots. This is true because ethnicity is a gift of God, and also a constitutive or essential element of being human. Nobody is just a general human being; one has to be of a particular sex, of a particular physique, of a particular talent, and so on. In the same way, one has to be of a particular ethnic origin. Our Asian past and heritage, therefore, is one of the ways in which God wants us to be human.

Ethnicity for us Asian immigrants in America, however, is of an especially critical importance because it is precisely on the basis of our race that we are often despised and rejected. In fact, our ethnic roots became somewhat invisible already when we were still in Asia. Under the influence of westernized Christianity, the Asian cultural past has been thought of as something that we must leave behind us. In Korean Christianity, for example, we were brought up perhaps with a greater familiarity with such names as Moses, Joseph, Noah, and Santa Claus than with such names as Won Hyo, Lee Toi Ge, and even Tan Gun. I remember the shocking experience I had a few years ago when I realized that I did not know enough Korean religious and philosophical personages even to count on one hand! Now here in America, Korea's four-thousand-year-old history is almost totally invisible. No one around here thinks it is important; it just does not figure. And my Korean-ness itself is abstracted into non-whiteness and then pronounced inferior by the larger American society.

We can only be Korean-American pilgrims (or Chinese-American, Japanese-American, etc.); we cannot live and work as Asian-American pilgrims if we do not possess a positive appreciation of the meaningfulness and worth of our Asian past--including its culture and religion. All the campaign to create a better public

image of the Asian-American here in the United States will be superficial and in the end without substance if we do not make a sacred pilgrimage to our Asian roots and resurrect in our own souls a living image of our own past. And to do this means, above all, to reevaluate the relationship between the Christian faith and the religious and cultural heritage of our own native cultures.

The missionary activity of the past was often based upon the so-called exclusivist view that all other religions besides Christianity were wholly pagan, heathen, idolatrous, and sinful. To be converted to Christianity has meant, for Asians as well as for other non-western persons, the discarding of their own cultural ethos and thus part of their selfhood. It has meant being ashamed of having had a past, of having had a history, and thus of having been human beings. However, such a reductionist conception of evangelization is not true Christianity but rather an ideology based upon ethnocentrism, and a misunderstanding even of Christian orthodoxy itself.²² The God of the Bible is not the God of one culture or of one history but of the whole world. The doctrine of the Trinity also states that God works as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, from eternity to eternity and everywhere. Of course we cannot ever compromise the centrality and normativeness of the historical Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). But that he is the way does not mean that there may not be other ways in which the eternal Second Person of the Trinity has worked and is working. That Jesus is the way means that he is the standard and the yardstick for us. Indeed, if we truly believe in Jesus as the way, we should be diligent in locating and appreciating all of the other lesser or similar ways in which the way is manifested and duplicated. God is much bigger than any one history or any one culture. Thus, in the name of the eternal Second Person of the Trinity and in the name of the eternal and universal Lordship of Christ, we must make a pilgrimage to all the Asian religious and cultural heritages, and celebrate and rejoice whenever and wherever we find the Logos

manifested. So we are not advocating a religious pluralism according to which it does not matter what you believe. We are already committed to Christ as he was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. He is unwaveringly "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). What we are advocating is that in the name of the same Christ our Lord we must regain a new appreciation of whatever God's truth we may discover in our own cultural past. At long last, becoming a Christian should cease to be the humiliation for having had a past! How could such a dehumanizing ideology be consistent with the religion of Jesus who said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"?

Thus, we as Asian-American pilgrims must know our own past and learn to respect it. We must gather from it whatever truths we find there to be consistent with God's revelation in Jesus and must use them in building "a better country" here on this American soil. Faith for us includes loyalty to Christ who is in our own Asian past, and the exercise of that faith is to go on a journey of pilgrimage to that past. To forget our Asian past is sin. To despise it is a rebellion against, an unfaithfulness to, the God of all histories and of all times.

It should be immediately added, however, that ethnicity, like all other finite principles, is not absolute and must not be worshipped. Ethnicity is a gift of God, but not God. This is why an ultra-nationalistic, separatist absorption within our own ethnic enclaves is an act of idolatry. Preston Williams, a black ethicist, has written:

One responsibility of religion is to point out that ethnicity is neither self-validating nor self-justifying. It is, despite its importance for self-identity and social cohesiveness, something ambiguous and doubtful. . . . Ethnicity therefore needs to be tested, critically examined, and evaluated in terms of its authenticity in mediating fundamental human values and in opening persons to loyalty to God. . . . Immigrants and others did not come to America simply to continue their ethnic heritages. They came because they were human beings and perceived that even more fundamental than ethnicity was the longing for justice, equality, liberty, and toleration.

Pilgrims of course know this. They are guided by their respect for where they came from. But they do not return to it but go on their journey toward the "city of God." Their ultimate destination transcends all "homelands" on this earth. And their vocation is the never-ceasing transformation of all cultures and traditions. The faith of pilgrims, therefore, is loyalty to the God in their ethnic roots, and not to the ethnic roots themselves.

3. Immigration as Pilgrimage

We have just seen that to live and work as authentic Asian-American pilgrims, we must know and respect where we came from. But it is obvious that we must also know where we are and where we are going. In order to shape the future course of life and work in a way that is realistic and relevant, we cannot ignore the fact that we have immigrated to America and that an American future is just as much a part of our selfhood as is our Asian past. But why do we need to speak about something that is already a fact that everybody knows? Speaking particularly about the first-generation Korean immigrants, we ask, Did we not all get the American visa and consciously immigrate to this country? Are we not here in America as immigrants? The fact of the matter is, however, that many of us have immigrated legally and physically but not in spirit and in mind. We know that to immigrate into America in spirit is to enter the land of marginality, to feel the pain of being on the boundary and even of experiencing rejection by the host society. There is a widespread tendency among us to avoid this wilderness by staying within our Korean ethnic enclaves and by nostalgically holding on to only things Korean and rejecting all things new and American. As already noted, this escapist refusal really to become immigrants is the cause of a serious and deepening alienation between the first and second generations in the Korean immigrant communities and families.²⁴ We are like the Hebrews who murmured against

Moses about their hardships in the wilderness, saying, "What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? . . . it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:11-12). We are not saying that the homeland we left was Egypt. Our situation is not completely identical with that of the Hebrews. But we are like them in refusing to march through the wilderness with the faith that God is leading us on a pilgrimage. For this reason, we need to look at the meaning of immigration, and we shall affirm that to immigrate into other lands can be a sacred calling for Christians, for pilgrims.

(a) First of all, there is a sense in which all human beings, even those who remain in their own homelands, are called to emigrate to other lands simply by virtue of their being human. As we have noted already, human beings are created in the image of God and thus are inherently inclined to look beyond the horizon of their own society and of their own culture. Even those Koreans who are in Korea cannot help but be interested in other lands and other peoples. In this broad sense, they are all immigrants while living in their own country. No human being can live as a human being without becoming an immigrant in this sense.

(b) Secondly, the Christian doctrines of God the Creator and of God's sovereignty over the whole world help us see why immigration into other lands is a Christian calling and responsibility. The God of the Bible is not the absentee God of deism who got the world going a long time ago but is now letting it run on its own. The doctrine of creatio continua affirms that without God's continuous creative activity the universe would evaporate into nothingness. Nor is God the Creator of some parts of the universe and not of others. There is only one God, and he has created and is creating everything; there is nothing that is not made by him. "In his hands are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it; and his hands formed the dry land" (Psalm 95:4-5). This would then imply that all lands, including

this American continent, belong to him, and also that all his children should feel comfortable in staying in any part of this universe. Faith in this God, therefore, would mean that we, the Asian immigrants, should be able to live in any city, walk on any street, of this American nation, fully believing that this also is our home. Is this not precisely what the prophet Jeremiah advised his Hebrew exiles in Babylonian captivity to do? In the book of Jeremiah are the following words:

These are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon . . .

It said: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

(Jeremiah 29:1-7)

Like Babylon, this American land is also God's own. Therefore we are being told by Jeremiah that we should not always look back to the land where we were born but should "build houses," "plant gardens," and "bear sons and daughters" in this American land. To really immigrate into America and to live and die there, then, is the sacred duty of any Christian Asian immigrant who believes in God the Creator. Immigration, in other words, is a religious duty, a sacred calling; it is a journey of pilgrimage into all of God's creation.

But did we not say before that pilgrims do not permanently settle at any one place but are always on the move looking forward to "a better country, that is, a heavenly one"? Did we not say that for a pilgrim there is no true homeland here on this earth? Is not a pilgrim the one who is freed from domination by any finite principle and is thereby always enabled to dream bigger dreams and have

higher aspirations? We do not believe that Jeremiah is denying any of this. He is not recommending that we should settle here in America as if this were our absolute and ultimate destination. America, as it is today, is not yet the promised land for anyone. What he is insisting upon, however, is that, in spite of the presence of much human sin and rebellion, the American land is still intrinsically God's own creation, and that for this reason we can sojourn here for a while and pitch tents. What this means is that a pilgrim's detachment from this world must not be understood to mean the Platonic or the dualistic belittling of all that is this-worldly, temporal, and finite. A pilgrim is detached from this world inasmuch as this world is full of sin; but a pilgrim, as a believer in God the Creator of the whole universe, is also the one who is willing to sojourn anywhere in this universe! Therefore, a balance, or a creative tension, must be preserved between the world as the good creation of God and the world as the realm of sin, between God the Creator and God the Redeemer, and between the eschatological hope for the future and the "realized eschatology" of the present.²⁵ So, a pilgrim has the faith to sojourn in any part of this universe inasmuch as it is the good creation of God, but he also refuses to make any part of this world his final homeland inasmuch as he looks forward to the "city of God." A pilgrim believes that the true realization of God's will on earth still lies in the future, but also knows that in and through Christ's redemptive work the realization of God's will can, at least in part, happen already on this earth. We the Asian-American pilgrims, therefore, always look for something better than the present Asia or the present America, but, at the same time, we do not mind staying for a while either in our homeland or in this American land, for we know that they are all God's.

(c) There is yet another way the theological meaning of immigration can be shown--namely, in terms of the doctrines of Christ and of salvation. We cannot

do any better here than to begin by quoting from H. Richard Niebuhr, who was himself a second-generation immigrant. He wrote in The Meaning of Revelation:

. . . he (Christ) is the man through whom the whole human history becomes our history. Now there is nothing that is alien to us. All wanderings of all the peoples, all the sins of men in all places become parts of our past through him.

. . . Through Christ we become immigrants into the empire of God which extends over all the world and learn to remember the history of that empire, that is of men in all times and places, as our history.²⁶

Niebuhr is not just saying that it is a nice thing for Christians to learn about other histories and peoples. Nor is he just saying that we should not mind emigrating into other countries because all persons are our brothers and sisters in Christ. His point is something much more fundamental for a Christian. It is his argument that becoming an immigrant is a matter of salvation, a matter of being redeemed by Christ. Christ is the savior of the whole humankind; he works as the Redeemer in the histories of all peoples. Thus, to become one with Christ is to become loyal to that Christ who can be found to be at work in the life-stories of all human beings. Histories are not usually written, of course, as the histories of Christ's redemptive work. They are merely seen as the stories of the political, social, and economic lives of people. But the Christian understanding of history looks at the deeper meaning of those histories. All histories are, in other words, the stories of how Christ is attempting--often being misunderstood and sometimes even being crucified--to bring about a reconciliation among human beings and God. Conversion to Christ, therefore, means a conversion in one's memories, an enlargement in one's own consciousness as a history-remembering and history-making being. A Christian repents with all other repentants of the world, and he rejoices with all other reconciled persons everywhere.

We, the Asian immigrants, could have expressed our identification with all the children of God even if we had stayed in our own countries. But by being

here on this American continent, we have this special opportunity actually to live and work with the people of another land. We have, in other words, a special vocation--that is, the vocation of demonstrating in our own actual lives our supreme loyalty to the Christ of all nations as we courageously enter into the American world and identify ourselves with that Christ who is already here. We must, therefore, stop vacillating, doubting, and hesitating about whether we really should ever have immigrated into this foreign land. We must stop always looking only backward to our beloved homeland that we once left. We are pilgrims with a task. We must enter into this American society and join our Savior who has already been working here for a long time. We must enter into this land and join our own children who are standing here mostly alone.

To immigrate seriously into America is, of course, asking for trouble. It is to be willing to feel marginalized. But must we not obey as Abraham did when "he went out, not knowing where he was to go"? We also cannot forget what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote:

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. (Hebrews 13:12-13)

We must at least sometimes go out from our comfortable Asian-American ethnic communities and churches into the marginal wilderness of America. We must do this if we are going to be with Christ, for he is there "outside the camp." We must bear whatever abuse Christ himself bears. And if we stand firmly by his cross, we shall also be with him in his power, in his resurrection.

In the American wilderness, Christ and our children are not the only ones we will find. We will also find many Christians of all ethnic backgrounds (including black and white persons) who are themselves in some ways marginalized and alienated. We must join with them as well as with our own children here,

and then go on to build a genuine human community on this American frontier. Thus, our pilgrimage into America is a pilgrimage to "a better country," to the Kingdom of Christ, to the Kingdom of God. And ultimately in this pilgrimage there are no racial distinctions. Paul Tillich, reflecting upon his own immigrant life in this country, wrote:

I now live, thanks to American hospitality, an ideal which is more consistent with the image of one mankind than that of Europe in her tragic self-dismemberment. It is the image of one nation in whom representatives of all nations and races can live as citizens. Although here too the distance between ideal and reality is infinite and the image is often deeply shadowed, nonetheless it is a kind of symbol of that highest possibility of history which is called "mankind," and which itself points to that which transcends reality--the Kingdom of God. In that highest possibility, the boundary between native and alien land ceases to exist.²⁷

Can we deny that the "one mankind" that Tillich is talking about is also our own "highest possibility"?

C. Christological Models

The faith of the pilgrim, then, is the faith that must be evoked and nurtured in the lives of the Asian immigrants in America. To do this, however, we need to lift up the concrete images or models that possess creative and transformative power. We can refer to many of the biblical figures as models of marginalized pilgrims with a sacred calling, such as Abraham, Moses, Ruth, the prophets, and so on. But our chief image or model, of course, can only be Jesus the Christ who is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). The critically important task that lies ahead of us is to present Jesus Christ to our Asian immigrants as the pioneer and perfecter of their pilgrim faith--that is, the faith of the marginalized with a sacred calling. Such a witness to Christ would involve at least the following Christological models:²⁸

1. Christ the Marginalized Person

If we take seriously the doctrine of the Fourth Gospel that "the Word became flesh" in Jesus Christ, the Christ must be presented to Asian immigrants as a

marginalized person who did not wholly belong to any existing culture or society and who was rejected by the power structure of his own society. We must present Jesus as he is described in the gospels--a politically and socially "weak" person who was free enough to make God's purpose his own supreme goal. We do not necessarily have to picture Jesus as wearing Asian dress or as having oriental physical features. But we must not fail to portray Jesus as the gospels portray him--that is, one who identified himself with the poor, the outcasts, and the marginalized. We do not have to insist that yellow is beautiful. But we must insist that marginality can be beautiful and sacred. And we will not be able to see God's purpose in our marginality until we see that the Son of God was a marginal person.

2. Christ the Crucified

The logic of the Cross is that the giving of love and forgiveness necessitates suffering--that is, the giving of oneself. In this way, even suffering attains meaning. The Asian immigrants as pilgrims need to see that God himself suffered and suffers with them. In a sense, this is a greater encouragement than the Resurrection. Even the worst of suffering can become bearable if the one who suffers is joined in suffering by God.

The life of a pilgrim requires that he give up himself--his security, his self-preoccupation, and his self-interest. To face one's marginality with honesty means that one leaves his homeland, goes out of his comfortable ethnic community, and goes into a foreign land. But the Cross of Christ has shown that to love and care is to give up oneself. It means believing in Jesus who said, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39). The Asian immigrants need to be shown that the Son of God was willing to lose his own life.

3. Christ the Resurrected

It was not just anyone who rose from the dead. The one who proved himself to be stronger than death was the marginalized Jesus who was socially and politically weak but who used his weakness as the opportunity to dream God's dreams and as the challenge to build God's kingdom.

The issue is this: Whose power is the real power--the power of those who have the political and social status, or the power of the marginalized pilgrims who yearn for a more just and humane society for this world? That it was Jesus who was victorious over death means that what is really powerful is the power of the pilgrim or the marginalized with a sacred calling and not the power of the "principalities and powers" of this world. So, the resurrection of Jesus means what Paul says in his letter to the Romans:

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

The marginalized Asian-American pilgrims need to know that this world's standards of what is real and what is powerful do not have the final authority.

4. Christ the Eschatological Hope

The realities of the present day weigh heavily upon marginal persons. In terms of the way things are, the future certainly does not seem to belong to them. If they are to be motivated to live and work as creative agents of God's kingdom on earth, they need to believe in the inevitability of the final triumph of that kingdom. To live as pilgrims, marginalized immigrants need to know that the final consummation of history belongs to Christ. They need to know that it is the same Christ who lived on earth as a marginal yet merciful and forgiving Servant who shall come again and consummate the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth.

D. The Task of the Church

The church, then, from our Asian immigrant perspective, is the community of those marginalized pilgrims with a sacred calling to follow Christ who is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." Within this community, this pilgrim faith will have to be nurtured and practiced. And we have identified this faith as containing the following three dimensions: the faith in marginalization as a sacred calling, the faith in the purposiveness of our own ethnic roots, and the faith in immigration as a pilgrimage. What must the church, then, do to nurture and practice this faith? For our brief discussion of this question, we will adopt H. Richard Niebuhr's threefold formula for the functions of the church: namely, apostle, pastor, and pioneer.²⁹ These three correspond to the traditional categories of kerygma (preaching), koinonia (nurturing community), and diakonia (the practice of faith in service of humanity). I shall speak most specifically of the Korean Immigrant church--that Asian-American church with which I am most directly connected. The basic thrust of what I say, however, applies to all Asian-American churches, I believe. I will also draw some implications for the white American churches.³⁰

1. The Responsibilities of the Korean-American Churches

(a) Apostle (kerygma): We must announce in word and deed the good news that bi-cultural life "on the boundary" is a sacred calling, and that we must make pilgrimages into both our Asian past and our American future. We must call upon our fellow Asian immigrants to meet this sacred challenge instead of avoiding it through either ultra-nationalism or excessive assimilation. To preach such a message, of course, may invite criticism from many sides. Some Korean immigrants, for example, will complain that the church is not Korean enough, while others will complain that it is not American enough. Within the larger Korean ethnic community, the true Korean church of Christ may indeed

have to be a "minority" group. Thus, Korean-American churches may have to face a double marginalization--first by the American society and then again by the larger Korean ethnic community which often tends to be nationalistic in ethos. Still, empowered by our pilgrim faith, we must fulfill the prophetic role of criticizing ethnocentrism wherever we find it. ³¹

(b) Pastor (koinonia): This nurturing function is a critically important role of our Asian-American churches. The first item on the agenda is to foster a sense of community among those Asian-American Christians who are aware of their marginality and to empower them with a sacred vocational consciousness. The awareness of a shared marginality will tend to create a sense of solidarity that could not be built only on the basis of our common national origin. Such persons may be rather small in number at first. But the health of our ethnic churches will indeed depend on them. Without them, for example, a communication with our second generation will not be possible.

All aspects of the life of the church should, as much as possible, show the respectability of both sides of our identity--Asian and American. Asian traditional customs and ideas should be preserved and encouraged. But attention should also be given to the American side of our selfhood. English should be spoken when appropriate. An awareness of the issues and problems of American society should be encouraged. All this should be done with the clear conviction that both sides of our identity can be respected and affirmed because our ultimate identity lies in something that transcends all nationality--namely, in our sacred calling to help build a more humane and just society wherever we find ourselves. This means that beyond and above our attention to our racial identities we must instill and nurture in our fellow immigrants an unwavering faith in the indestructible love of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. The more ostensibly social dimension

of our nurture and the more ostensibly religious are not in any way separable from each other. But still they are not reducible to either the one or the other.

Some Korean immigrant congregations, for example, are adopting a reactionary posture--that is, a religiously fundamentalist/other-world-oriented/emotional and culturally separatist/ultra-nationalistic stance. Inasmuch as these churches tend to be escaping from their marginal, Asian-American reality, their ethos is not the ideal. Such an approach will in the long run prove to be deeply alienating to our second generation, who have no choice but to face their bi-cultural situation. Such an ethos will also impede the immigrants' creative adjustment to their new environment. But above all, they will not know the joy and meaningfulness that will result from positively responding to their sacred calling to live as a pilgrim people in a world larger than their native culture.

It should be noted, however, that these other-world-oriented and nationalistic churches may be succeeding in fulfilling their nurturing function at least in relation to certain specific individuals--the bewildered new arrivals and the very elderly who often, though not always, cannot be expected to walk in the wilderness of marginality. The warm atmosphere of a very traditionally Korean church, for example, may be very comforting to disoriented new immigrants.³² Fundamentalist, emotional faith may also foster a sense of identification with their transcendent destiny with the help of which immigrants can safely endure the bewildering experience of coming to a strange new country. However, in the long run, such churches will not enlarge the being and life of Korean immigrants as human beings, nor will they help those immigrants face the real world in which, whether they like it or not, they find themselves.

The most urgent note that needs to be sounded in regard to the church's pastoral or nurturing function, however, has to do with the plight of the second generation. The marginality theory tells us that the immigrant youth may have

a far greater sense of marginality than any other group. The way things are right now, these young people feel rejected and alienated by both sides of their Asian-American identity. They are rejected by the white American society. But when they return to their Korean homes and to their Korean churches, they are often alienated again because their parents and elders disapprove of their "excessive" Americanization. These young people urgently need the nurturing ministries of the church of Jesus Christ. They need to be told that they, as Asian-Americans, are beautiful people. Churches should not be ashamed to be truly Asian-American, bi-cultural, so that they can show in deed that these Americanized Korean youth can be proud of their hyphenated identity.

One obvious implication of all this is the urgent need to train truly Asian-American, bi-cultural, pastors and church leaders. Asian-American youth need to be attracted into ministry. Truly bi-culturally oriented continuing educational programs for pastors need to receive increased support. These are the needs that require our immediate and wholehearted attention.

(c) Pioneer (diakonia): The pioneer function of our churches is to live the pilgrim faith in actual life so as to provide the world at large with an example of what a Christ-centered life can be. The Korean immigrant church's need to become actually Asian and American in character has already been discussed. What we need to highlight here is our church's responsibility to build a bridge of mutual support and encouragement with churches of other ethnic backgrounds. Since the Korean immigrants perceive themselves as being marginalized and even rejected by the Anglo-American society, they find it difficult to establish close ties with American congregations. As far as I know, most attempts at joint programs and meetings have had only a very limited success. But this should not discourage us. As indicated already, there are many

Anglo-American Christians who feel alien in their own churches. They can be fellow pilgrims with us.

Also, our responsibility to cooperate with Christians in other minority groups (such as the blacks, the Hispanics, and women) in their struggle for humanization cannot be overemphasized. The black people, for example, have a much longer history than we in their minority status in America and also in their struggle for justice. As pilgrims, we must be willing to go beyond our own stories to listen to the stories of others and to learn from them.

Studies in social psychology also tell us that even small contacts which are very superficial and impersonal, if repeated, can generate common memories and other bases upon which we can build stronger ties and communities. However little and unspectacular they may seem, all attempts at dialogue and cooperation should be encouraged and followed through with vigor.

2. Some Implications for the White American Churches

The Asian-American theology cannot determine what the Christian theology within the white American context should be. Nevertheless, if what we have said so far is basically a Christian perspective, it may have some valid implications for American churches in general. Let us mention a few.

(a) Marginality as a Christian Calling: We have interpreted marginality as an essential mark of being human--that is, as the indication that human beings are created in the image of God, capable of self-transcendence and creativity. And we have affirmed that marginal persons are called by God to live and work as pilgrims toward "a better country." In this world that is governed so often by the "principalities and powers," Christians can only be "exiles and aliens," that is, pilgrims.

Much of American Christianity needs to become marginalized. Just as in the case of many Asian ethnic churches, American churches must not be afraid to go

"outside the camp" where Christ is--that is, into the wilderness of cultural and social marginality. American Christianity must become culturally "many" so that many sorts of persons can find a sense of community in it.

The hope for white American churches, then, lies in those marginalized white American Christians. I know many white American Christians and their leaders who love Jesus of Nazareth in their hearts but feel like strangers in most of their churches as they are today. I know many white Americans who feel diminished and powerless because of their social and economic status, their profession, or their sex. These persons need to be told that their marginality is not humiliation or weakness but rather the precious possibility of sanity and humanity in their society and in their churches. They need to be told that they have been called to become pilgrims with a sacred mission. They need to be told that they are beautiful people who can live for the future as defined by Jesus Christ and not for the future as defined by the rich and the powerful.

(b) The Pilgrimage to One's Ethnic Roots: We interpreted ethnicity as one of the divinely determined ways in which human beings are human beings. But we also pointed to its finitude. One implication of this, at least, is that the white American Christians must go on a journey to their particular ethnicity. Thinking of the caucasian ethnicity as one among many families of human beings rather than as the super race, may have many salutary results. Benjamin Reist has expressed the matter as follows:

One cannot think black or red at the same moment without doing violence to one or the other. And so the road to inexhaustible freedom for whites involves becoming neither black nor red, but white, for the first time. It involves becoming white as liberated into particularity, the particularity of being one component in the full mosaic that is humanity; becoming white in such a way that white cannot be white unless red and black are equally present in the historical space that is human liberation. 33

(c) Immigration as Pilgrimage: Finally, we have interpreted immigration into other cultures and histories as an integral part of one's conversion to Christ who is the Lord of all cultures and histories. It is often said that America is a land of immigrants; but the fact of the matter is that most Americans have ceased to immigrate a long time ago. Just as in the case of many Korean immigrants, Americans too have the tendency to succumb to the temptation to limit the horizons of their life to the comfortable world of their own culture and their own ethnicity. Is it not incredible that, in a land that boasts of being the land of immigrants, very few people are capable of, or interested in, speaking foreign languages? Is it not also noteworthy that a culture that at one time aspired to become the "melting pot" of all human traditions has largely dismissed as pagan and worthless many of the world's religious and cultural traditions?

The implication of the conception of Christian existence as pilgrimage would be that the white Christians, like Asian immigrants, have the responsibility to lead their people on an unending journey of pilgrimage to "a better country." And such a responsibility would certainly include the task of becoming spiritual immigrants into other cultures and traditions. The white Christians, like all others who would live as pilgrims, must find a way to let the Christ of the whole world become their Master and Lord even in their historical rememberings by learning to respect and honor him wherever the traces of his presence are found. Gleanings from such rememberings may indeed help all of us in achieving an ever greater understanding of what God has been trying to tell us in Jesus Christ. As the author of The First Epistle of Peter tells us the Christians of all races, are we not all "exiles of the Dispersion" who have been called "for obedience to Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:1-2)?

NOTES

- ¹ Everett V. Stonequist, The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict (New York: Russell & Russell, 1937), p.8.
- ² Charles Marden and Gladys Meyer, Minorities in American Society (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1968), pp. 44-45.
- ³ Stonequist, p. 135; Alan Kerckhoff and Thomas McCormick, "Marginal Status and Marginal Personality," Social Forces 34 (October, 1977), pp. 48-55.
- ⁴ Won Moo Hurh, "Comparative Study of Korean Immigrants in the U.S.: A Typological Study," in B.S. Kim, et al, editors, Koreans in America (Association of Korean Christian Scholars in North America, 1977), p. 95.
- ⁵ See Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), Ch. 5; Stonequist, pp. 120-200.
- ⁶ See Hankook Ilbo, September 8, 1978.
- ⁷ See Joong-ang Ilbo, October 9, 1979.
- ⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology I (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p.8.
- ⁹ Walter Brueggemann, The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p.14.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 189.
- ¹¹ Among the most representative works in liberation theology, I mention here only four: Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), Juan Luis Segundo, A Theology For the Artisans of a New Humanity (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1970), and Letty Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).
- ¹² This is a tentative working definition inspired mainly by my reading of Brueggemann's The Land. See also J.B. Soucek, "Pilgrims and Sojourners: An Essay in Biblical Theology," Communion Viatorum I (1958), pp. 3-17; Victor Turner and Edith Turner, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).
- ¹³ See Langdon Gilkey, Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp.226ff.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in A Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), Ch. 7.
- ¹⁵ See Stonequist, p. 219.
- ¹⁶ Victor W. Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), p. 129.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁸Carol P. Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), p.9.

¹⁹Ibid., p.14. Carol Christ here makes reference to Michael Novak, The Experience of Nothingness (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

²⁰Further work is necessary in correlating our discussion of marginality with various contemporary studies on the meaning of poverty. For an interesting discussion on the ambiguity in the nature of poverty, see Gustavo Gutierrez, op cit, pp. 287-306.

²¹For a theoretical discussion of the possibility of a new "Korean-American ethnicity," see Won Moo Hurh, "Toward a New Community and Identity: The Korean-American Ethnicity," Byongsuh Kim and Sang Hyun Lee, Editors, The Korean Immigrant in America (Montclair, NJ: Association of Korean Christian Scholars, 1980), pp.1ff.

²²See Tongshik Ryu, The Christian Faith Encounters the Religions of Korea (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1965), pp.149-184); also, Kosuke Koyama, "Christianity Suffers from 'Teacher Complex,'" Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, Editors, Mission Trends No.2 :Evangelization(New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 70-75.

²³Preston Williams, "Religion and the Making of Community in America," Journal of the American Academy of Religion XLIV:4 (December, 1976), p. 603.

²⁴See Gui-Young Yu, "Koreans in America: Social and Economic Adjustments," Byongsuh Kim and Sang Hyun Lee, op cit, pp. 75-98; also, Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation (Macomb, IL: Western Illinois University, 1980).

²⁵See Norman Young, Creator, Creation and Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p.165.

²⁶H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962), p.116.

²⁷Paul Tillich, On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966). p. 96.

²⁸For an helpful discussion on the "christological models for black vocation," see William H. Becker, "Vocation and Black Theology," Calvin E. Bruce and William R. Jones, Editors, Black Theology II: Essays on the Formation and Outreach of Contemporary Black Theology (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1978), pp.42ff.

²⁹H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Responsibility of the Church for Society," Kenneth Latourette, Editor, The Gospel, the Church, and the World (New York: Harper & Row, 1946), pp.111-133.

³⁰For very helpful discussions of the task of Asian American churches written from various Asian American points of view, see Roy Sano, Compiler, The Theologies of Asian Americans and Pacific Peoples (Berkeley: Pacific and Asian American Center for Theology & Strategies, 1976).

³¹See Myung Gul Son, "Koreans' Assimilation to American Society and the Role of the Church," *Logos* 1:1; also, Chan Hie Kim. "Biblical and Theological Basis of Korean-American Ministry," Roy Sano, pp. 376f.

³²See J.J. Mol, Churches and Immigrants (Supplement to R.E.M.P. Bulletin: May, 1961); also, Steve S. Shim, "An Analytical Study of Recent Korean Immigrant Churches in Southern California: A Psycho-Religious Approach to the Basic Needs of Korean Congregations," Roy Sano, pp.379ff.

³³Benjamin Reist, Theology in Red, White, and Black (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p.183.

³⁴For very helpful discussions from somewhat similar points of view, see Douglas John Hall, Lighten Our Darkness: Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976); also, George Webber, Today's Church: A Community of Exiles & Pilgrims (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979).